UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
19th meeting
held on
Tuesday, 17 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

92-57815 6301S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.19
23 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/47/21, A/47/462, A/SPC/47/3)

1. Mr. MURTAZA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the present world information order was deficient in many respects. Since developed countries enjoyed a virtual monopoly over the gathering and dissemination of information due to their technological advantages, particularly in the field of satellite communication, the third world found itself at a loss to arrange for a better balanced flow of information. The developing countries needed help in strengthening their communication capacities through the transfer of technology, sharing of professional expertise and all other measures possible to promote a two-way flow of information.

2. Pakistan fully supported freedom of information and expression. The press in Pakistan was free from any restraint and was playing a prominent part in national and international affairs in support of the institution of democracy. The Government of Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif had taken action to integrate Pakistan into global information systems.

3. His delegation noted with satisfaction the activities carried out by the Department of Public Information (DPI) in connection with international peace and security, African economic recovery and development, combating the policies and practices of apartheid, the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, peace-keeping operations and cooperation with news agencies and broadcasting organizations of the non-aligned and other countries.

4. His delegation was surprised at the disclosure in the report of the Secretary-General that Development Forum would not be published after 1992, and urged DPI to take immediate measures for the continuation of that important publication, at least until the problems it faced were addressed by the Committee on Information at its next substantive session.

5. With regard to the issue of the United Nations information centres around the world, he stressed the importance of giving priority to the resolutions and mandates of Member States. Administrative decisions in the Secretariat should obviously not take precedence over the General Assembly mandate. His delegation also wished to caution against a selective implementation of the General Assembly mandate. The enthusiastic cooperation of DPI with UNESCO should not be confined to a limited area, and must focus on other useful aspects, such as the strengthening of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC).

6. Expressing his appreciation for the statement made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information, he said that DPI had a

(Mr. Murtaza, Pakistan)

significant role to play in the revitalized United Nations. His delegation also supported the activities of the United Nations Correspondents Association, and called upon DPI to provide greater facilities to journalists for their professional activities.

7. His delegation would like also to see the strengthening of the Information Products Division, and commended the efforts of the Asia and Pacific Radio Unit. Pakistan wished to emphasize the further strengthening of its Urdu language broadcasts.

8. His delegation was concerned that Pakistan and other developing countries were not adequately represented on the staff of DPI, and urged that the situation be rectified in all recruitments, especially at the senior level.

9. His delegation welcomed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as the new members of the Committee on Information.

10. Mr. PRASAI (Nepal) said that the media of the North had globalized the development model of the industrialized countries; consequently, the traditional values and cultures of the developing countries were coming under increasing pressure. Nepal was firmly committed to the principle of free flow of information and ideas. The present situation was rooted in the lack of access to advanced technology and know-how; that same discrepancy was also at the root of the disparity between the more developed and the less developed among the developing countries. There must be an adequate transfer of technology and know-how on terms compatible with the economic condition of the recipient countries, as well as cooperation among developed and developing countries and among developing countries. The International Programme for the Development of Communication of UNESCO was promising in that regard. His delegation supported the central role of UNESCO in the development of information and communication.

11. Nepal accorded a high priority to the development of information and communication, and sought to use modern technologies of information and communication as part of its strategy to combat problems of underdevelopment.

12. Turning to the role of the United Nations Department of Public Information, he said that his delegation understood the budgetary constraints of the Department. An essential basis of its success would be its ability to strengthen cooperation with the media, non-governmental organizations and other agencies involved in information networks world wide. The Department had done admirable work in covering United Nations activities in the political and security fields and, especially, in connection with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

13. With regard to the United Nations information centres, he said that his delegation had no problem with the efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure an efficient and cost-effective United Nations presence in the field, but

(Mr. Prasai, Nepal)

wished to underline the need to keep in mind the interests of the developing countries. His delegation also wished to underline the importance it attached to the DPI training programme for media personnel, especially from the least developed countries.

14. Mr. ZVONKO (Belarus) said that the positive changes on the global political scene and the lifting of the iron curtain had opened up broad opportunities for inter-State cooperation in the exchange of information. For its part, Belarus had adopted new legislation guaranteeing the freedom of information, which rendered unthinkable a repetition of the post-Chernobyl situation in 1986, when the authorities had concealed the truth about the disaster from the people whose lives and health had been endangered.

15. Belarus believed that DPI was carrying out highly valuable work, in particular by disseminating information on the maintenance of international peace and security and by publicizing the Secretary-General's report "An Agenda for Peace".

16. The Organization's information structures were currently faced with the task not only of disseminating, but also of gathering information, particularly for the purposes of preventive diplomacy. Belarus believed that the United Nations information centres should be strengthened and mandated to assist in that task, thereby obviating the need to establish special mechanisms. The information centres would not take the place of fact-finding missions, but could serve as early-warning centres in the prevention of crises.

17. While DPI was performing valuable work in the environmental field, it was regrettable that the Secretary-General's report (A/47/462) contained no mention of the Chernobyl issue. The dissemination of information on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident was essential in order to alert the world's population to such dangers and the need to prevent similar disasters. The United Nations information services should take due account of those considerations, and Belarus was ready to make available all the information at its disposal on the Chernobyl problem. Work in that area by DPI would be significantly facilitated by the establishment in Minsk of a United Nations interim office, which, as Minsk was a coordinating centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States, would also assist the Organization in gathering information in that region.

18. As a member of the Committee on Information, Belarus hoped that the draft resolutions contained in the Committee's report would be adopted by consensus.

19. Mr. EVANS (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that they would like to pay tribute to those journalists who had died in the past year in the performance of their duty.

20. One of the most important functions of DPI was to disseminate information on United Nations activities, especially peace-keeping operations. Wide press

(Mr. Evans, United Kingdom)

coverage was the best way to enhance public awareness of, and support for, the increasing role of the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security. The European Community and its member States were pleased to note that there had been a number of welcome developments in that regard over the past year, including the Department's coverage of the situation in Cambodia and the chronology of events in the former Yugoslavia. They hoped that similar attention could be paid, within available resources, to other important operations, for example that under way in Somalia.

21. The European Community and its member States also wished to pay particular tribute to DPI for its work on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. They took the opportunity, however, to reiterate their view that information components should form, when necessary, an integral part of the plans for United Nations conferences and peace-keeping operations when the budget implications were submitted to the General Assembly for approval, and should not, in principle, be subject to ad hoc arrangements at a later stage.

22. On the issue of the United Nations information centres, the European Community and its member States had long believed that a coherent strategy was required, and had welcomed the initial steps taken to ensure that appropriate centres were integrated with UNDP offices without losing their functional autonomy. They also welcomed the establishment of interim offices in six members of the Commonwealth of Independent States. They noted with appreciation the measures taken by DPI to implement paragraphs 1 (l) and 1 (m) of General Assembly resolution 46/73 B.

23. Another area of major interest to the European Community and its member States was the working conditions of journalists at the United Nations. The United Nations would have to react imaginatively to meet those requirements in the light of the current financial restrictions.

24. In conclusion, the European Community and its member States paid tribute to the efforts of all the staff of DPI over the past year, and acknowledged with gratitude the commitment and professionalism exhibited by the former Spokesman for the Secretary-General and Director of the Executive Media Service and by the former Deputy Spokesperson. They extended a warm welcome to their successors.

25. Mr. ROSTING (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries, said that it was vital to maintain the current consensus on the issue of information and the mandate for the public information policies and activities of the United Nations. Recent global developments had increased the demand for information about current events, while the opening up of new regions to the free flow of information and the development of improved technical means of dissemination had vastly increased the global audience, contributing to a closer relationship between nations and placing pressure on Governments and the United Nations to resolve the conflicts thereby revealed.

(Mr. Rosting, Denmark)

26. Freedom of information, guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was indispensable for democratic societies. The Nordic countries therefore deplored all the more resolutely the continued violations of that fundamental right and paid tribute to those journalists who had suffered or died in the performance of their duty. They also stressed the importance for a free press to be developed independently of Government influences, in the context of broader efforts to consolidate democratic processes and, in that connection, welcomed the declaration issued at the October 1992 United Nations-UNESCO seminar in Alma Ata. The Nordic countries also reaffirmed their support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication and their commitment to the development of information and communication infrastructures in the developing countries.

27. The recent far-reaching political changes in the world would significantly increase the responsibilities of DPI in coming years, and the Nordic countries therefore welcomed its efforts to rationalize and streamline its work. DPI should respond to new situations as they occurred and play a role in such critical areas as peace-keeping, election monitoring and the follow-up to the Conference on Environment and Development.

28. He supported the integration of certain United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices, since a unified United Nations presence would promote efficient use of scarce resources, particularly in the area of information dissemination. In addition, the Nordic countries strongly supported efforts to disseminate information on the important areas highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/47/462), such as peace-keeping, human rights, economic and social development, disarmament, the role of women in society and environment and development-related activities, all of which stood high on their own United Nations agenda, and hoped that the draft resolutions and draft decision contained in the Committee's report would be adopted by consensus.

29. Mr. RAFIRASME (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that information was a fundamental element of international relations and that its collection, publication and dissemination were key elements in any economy. Accordingly, the free flow of information was essential not only to solving the problems of peace-keeping and development but, more important, to building confidence between nations. And yet the gap separating the industrialized countries from the rest of the world prevented the majority of nations from making known their own values. The world was perceived according to the opinions of those in power, a situation incompatible with true freedom of information. The imbalance of power prevented more than 80 per cent of the world population from taking part in the global communications system; that situation had arisen because of concentration of communications technology, the predominance of economic interests, the wish to impose a particular cultural order and, certainly, of inadequate regional and interregional cooperation among developing countries.

(Mr. Rafirasme, Islamic Republic of Iran)

30. His delegation wished to renew its appeal for the establishment of a new world information and communication order not founded on opposition to the free flow of information or to the freedom of the press, but rather on the fact that the current situation was incompatible with those principles. International institutions, and DPI in particular, should help developing countries overcome the inherent imbalances of the current system.

31. With the strengthening of the role of the United Nations system, there was a need for greater support for DPI activities to facilitate its principal task of promoting United Nations objectives. Information centres were the principal means of reaching the general public in Member States, but they were so underfunded that very often they were unable to carry out their mandates. The inequitable distribution of budgetary resources among centres, the lack of clear logic in their establishment and the still ambiguous issue of their integration with UNDP field offices merited special attention during the following session of the Committee on Information.

32. With regard to the Tehran centre, his delegation was continuing to discuss with responsible officials of the Department the implementation of General Assembly resolutions concerning its reactivation. He joined with the other members of the Group of 77 in seeking full and prompt implementation of all of the mandates formulated by the Committee on Information, particularly those concerning the information centres. He drew members' attention to the fact that IRNA, the Iranian press agency, was about to conclude an agreement with DPI for the distribution of United Nations information materials to the news agencies of members of the Non-Aligned Movement.

33. In restructuring the Department, careful attention must be paid to achieving an equitable geographical distribution of staff in the Professional and higher categories, since the Department should reflect the diversity of the United Nations. Naturally, that process should likewise guarantee the highest level of integrity and efficiency.

34. Mr. REYES MATTA (Chile) said that the Committee's deliberations had emphasized two priority goals: to continue and strengthen professional training and to continue programmes to publicize United Nations activities. To do so, the United Nations should concentrate its communications effort on two areas of dynamic growth, making use, first, of the mass media's global scope and immediacy and, secondly, of the global, regional and national interaction of non-commercial information systems and of non-governmental organizations' information networks.

35. In both cases, the United Nations could make use of its major competitive advantage, its ability to grasp local and global reality at the same time. Through its projects, its peace-keeping operations, the multinational origin of its experts, and its agencies' presence in the field, the United Nations

(Mr. Reyes Matta, Chile)

was in a unique position to know, understand and explain what was happening in specific parts of the world, while through the work of its principal organs - the General Assembly, the Councils and the Secretariat - and its agencies, it was also able to provide the world with an overview of the current situation and its future prospects. The United Nations should press that advantage and take action on information.

36. In communications, 1992 had been a year of significant progress for the United Nations: the members of the Security Council had held their first summit meeting of heads of State; the Secretary-General had put forward his "Agenda for Peace"; the Conference on Environment and Development had been held in Rio de Janeiro. In each case, one or more of the necessary factors for successful communication had been present: principals of recognized prestige, a novel and stimulating message, and a dynamic interaction with the audience involved.

37. The universality of modern communication did not lie in the millions of receivers scattered over the globe, nor in the satellites broadcasting to them, but arose when people all over the world took up a common theme and began to think about it. When people were interested in a subject, the media were more than willing to broadcast it. Accordingly, United Nations information systems should seek to become cultural facilitators, mediating the interaction among various messages and innovative visions.

38. The great information revolution of modern times was based on "communities of interest" able to get their messages across despite borders and language barriers, thanks in part to alternative information networks on video and audio cassette. The contemporary audio-visual world had room for both the professionalism of the official media and for the creativity and curiosity of social groups and individuals recounting their experience.

39. In the field of information, the United Nations must seek immediacy as well as precision and depth. Lately, the newsman's six classic questions were being replaced by three modules of equal importance: the facts, the story and the context. Traditionally, in developing countries in particular, the story had been the predominant factor. Nowadays, however, there was a trend towards presenting the facts in their own right, thereby enhancing the communicative gestalt, while the context, in an age of information overload, was becoming more and more essential to understanding the situation.

40. One of the priorities in the work of DPI should be to identify shared perceptions. As a world forum, the United Nations would increasingly be the stage on which ideas and courses of action were formulated. It was not enough simply to relate in sequence what each speaker had said: there was a need to define what they had in common. Another priority should be to identify emerging issues and provide imaginative guidance on them, while a third should be to promote simultaneous world-wide action. To that end, people all over the world should be brought together to discuss their concerns and discover

(Mr. Reyes Matta, Chile)

what they had in common. The technological resources existed, and with an imaginative proposal, the requisite funds could be raised. What was lacking was the will to bring professional skills to bear on promoting new kinds of dialogue in the world as a means of providing guidance to rulers.

41. In the twenty-first century, the processes of communication would give rise to an interactive culture, with increased cross-border dialogue among people and countries. Such a culture was already being formed, as a global awareness and sense of belonging was directly related to people's roots in a local culture that strengthened their identity. The time had come to set in motion an information agenda for peace based on the experience of the first 50 years of the United Nations and on new strategies for peace and security in the coming decades.

42. Mr. WORONIECKI (Poland) said that the future information gathering activities of DPI should be highly selective and carefully tailored to changing priorities in the information market. Poland fully supported the need for first-hand access to information on the newly independent States, which could be provided through such measures as the creation of information components within integrated offices, and it shared the hope of the European Community that operational and financial modalities for that concept would shortly be finalized, in particular between UNDP and DPI.

43. The importance of the United Nations information centres as vehicles for outreach to the populations of developed and developing countries was generally acknowledged, but they had an equally important role to play in the countries in transition. His Government therefore regretted the lack of progress in establishing an information component in Warsaw and hoped that such a centre would become operational in 1993 as a joint venture with UNDP. The centre's services could also be made available to neighbouring countries, particularly the Baltic States. The importance attached by the Polish Government to familiarizing its public with United Nations activities was exemplified by the special United Nations-related events already held in the country, and much more could be done in that area once an information centre was established. In addition, the countries in transition needed assistance in establishing or restructuring their own democratic information channels, and he hoped that their appeal for temporary assistance from the United Nations agencies or regional commissions concerned would not be turned down.

44. In Poland's view, three areas should be given priority in information activities, namely: international peace and security; sustainable social and economic development, in conjunction with environmental protection; and human rights, while other issues, such as apartheid, should be gradually phased out to release funds for new, important activities.

45. While information had effectively been disseminated on the second priority area, primarily through the World Economic Survey 1992 and the World Investment Report, production of the important system-wide publication on

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

economic and social issues, Development Forum, remained behind schedule and its continued existence was threatened. Poland reiterated its support for that publication, which was of great benefit to the developing countries and the countries in transition and hoped that the matter would be taken up by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

46. His delegation was encouraged by progress in 1992 in coordinating information activities, and considered that the Joint United Nations Information Committee served a useful supplementary function. He suggested that more information on the Joint Committee's recommendations should be made available to Governments and to the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), and hoped that the draft resolutions contained in the report of the Committee on Information would be adopted by consensus.

The meeting rose at noon.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
20th meeting
held on
Wednesday, 18 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 105: PROGRAMME PLANNING

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

92-57863 6407S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.20
2 December 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 105: PROGRAMME PLANNING

1. The CHAIRMAN informed the members of the Committee that upon expiration, on 17 November, of the deadline for submission of comments on revised programmes 1, 2, 4 to 6, 8, 35, 36 and 38 of the medium-term plan for 1992-1997, he had received communications from Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, the United Kingdom, on behalf of the 12 members of the European Community, and the United States. The communication from the United Kingdom had suggested that the Special Political Committee send a single message to the Fifth Committee indicating that a consensus had been reached in support of the Secretariat's proposals regarding the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan as modified by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its resumed thirty-second session. However, as he had received five other communications conveying the views of Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba and the United States on some of the programmes referred to the Committee, he proposed to send a letter to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee transmitting all of the communications received and to circulate that letter, together with its attachments, as a document of the Committee, as had been decided at the third meeting on 20 October.

2. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/47/21)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/463)

3. Mr. ADOUKI (Congo) said that, although the Secretary-General's work had been fruitful, there was a deplorable lack of consistency in his report. Neither the cause of information nor the authority of the department responsible were served by the report's many faults: the absence of tables on financial resources, the lack of specific information on the information centres, their elimination or their absorption by UNDP or on their budgets or the support of the host countries, not to mention other questions which were hardly touched on: the prospects of the Department of Public Information, apartheid (the black South African community still did not have the right to vote), balance in recruitment, equality of working languages, etc. He in no way questioned the integrity of the Secretariat staff, which was itself complaining of difficult working conditions, aggravated by the restructuring process, which was creating a climate of uncertainty that was clearly unfavourable to the cause of information at the United Nations.

4. Welcoming the new spirit which made open and constructive discussion in the Committee possible, he deplored the fact that the world of information and

(Mr. Adouki, Congo)

communications remained ruled by marketing standards and that, for example, a conquest of radio space by the network of industrialized countries was taking place in spite of the lip service paid by the media of the advantaged countries to pluralism, respect for difference of opinion, freedom of the press and free movement of ideas. The appeal for a new world information order was more timely than ever, and the developing countries needed assistance or rather a partnership of a new kind to develop their infrastructures in that field.

5. His country was endowed with a free and pluralistic press, of which the Supreme Information and Communications Council was the constitutional guarantor; it nevertheless needed training and assistance, particularly from the United Nations, to strengthen its structures in the information field. Unfortunately, the United Nations was hardly fulfilling the hopes that had been placed in it, as it had left vacant the post of director of its Brazzaville Information Centre, although that post had been mandated by a General Assembly resolution, and had been for years a source of valuable documentation not only for the Congo but for the neighbouring peoples of Angola and Namibia. It was unfortunate that the United Nations, which had played so active a role in decolonization, was now abandoning that effort, especially in the light of the fact that other United Nations Information Centres - such as those at Nairobi, Beirut and Mexico City, for example - were experiencing the same problems.

6. Welcoming the fact that the problem had been solved in India and that a director had been appointed for the newly created centre at Windhoek, he called for an end to the administrative malfunctioning that was impeding the solution of the Brazzaville Centre situation even though the Congolese Government had agreed to the appointment of a director more than a year ago. He would not go into the other questions relating to information on which his delegation had stated its position on 7 April 1992 during the fourteenth session of the Committee on Information.

7. Mr. SALIMI (Afghanistan) said that the dramatic changes that had put an end to the polarization of the world into two military and political blocs, and to totalitarian regimes and the cold war, had revealed the importance of the flow of information and its role in shaping events everywhere in the world. But economic disparities affected the power of the media: the developing countries were still saturated with information originating with the media of the developed countries. That being so, the establishment of a new, fairer and more balanced information and communications order aimed at strengthening peace and international understanding was inseparable from the establishment of a new international economic order, and the United Nations Department of Public Information acting in concert with other international organizations, including the Joint United Nations Information Committee and the United Nations Information Centres should do everything possible to promote such a new order.

(Mr. Salimi, Afghanistan)

8. While welcoming the valuable information activities of the United Nations in support of international peace and security, world disarmament and peace-keeping operations, he was of the opinion that the Department of Public Information should expand its cooperation with the pool of news agencies of non-aligned countries (NANAP) and establish similar cooperation with other information institutions of the non-aligned countries such as the Broadcasting Organization of the Non-aligned Countries (BONAC), the International Islamic Agency (IINA) and the Islamic States Broadcasting Organization (ISBO).

9. He reaffirmed his delegation's support of the two draft resolutions recommended to the General Assembly by the Committee on Information entitled "Information in the Service of Humanity" and "United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities", and welcomed the increase in the number of members of the Committee on Information, in which his delegation hoped to participate soon.

10. Ms. CAMARA (Côte d'Ivoire) stressed the important role of the Department of Public Information, truly the showcase of the United Nations in a radically changing world, with information playing a central role in the success of any undertaking. The Department served a threefold purpose, that of disseminating knowledge about the United Nations, that of promoting a new international information and communication order by strengthening North-South cooperation and promoting freedom of the press, and that of ensuring the presence and prestige of the United Nations, in all regions, if not in all Member States, through its information centres. The Department also performed a most useful task by fostering awareness of various dangers threatening the planet, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and contributing towards the maintenance of international peace and security.

11. Expressing appreciation of the scope and diversity of the Department's activities and, in particular, of its coverage of the Earth Summit, she expressed the hope that the same level of information quality would be maintained at forthcoming international events such as the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in Vienna in June 1993, the Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo in 1994, the World Conference on Women scheduled to be held in Beijing in 1995, the Summit on social development and the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

12. In order to reach the largest possible public, publications such as UN Chronicle, Development Forum and Africa Recovery had to reflect all cultural sensibilities in a balanced manner and to respect the parity of working languages. With a view to fostering a more constructive spirit of solidarity, the Department should do still more to promote exchanges of experience and to publicize efforts made and successes achieved in various parts of the world so as to correct the all-too-often negative image conveyed by the international press. The difficulties encountered by Africa Recovery, a publication which faithfully reflected African realities and served as a useful antidote to a potentially paralysing "Afro-pessimism", were therefore to be deplored.

(Ms. Camara, Côte d'Ivoire)

13. An important aspect of the Department's task was summed up in the title of draft resolution I proposed by the Committee on Information, "Information in service of humanity", aimed principally at improving the information systems and communication techniques of the developing countries. Those countries were being flooded with second-hand information, and the Department could do a great deal to facilitate their press agencies' access to original sources, especially as regards information relating to the Organization's activities in connection with development and with the peaceful settlement of conflicts. The Department should continue to organize training courses for journalists from developing countries, and meetings and seminars should be organized to encourage cooperation between press agencies of the North and those of the South with a view to reducing existing disparities between them. She wished to thank the Department of Public Information and UNESCO for organizing the seminar at which the Windhoek Declaration, fully endorsed by her country, had been adopted.

14. It was surprising that the question of information centres was barely touched upon in the report of the Secretary-General although it had been at the very heart of the debate in the Committee on Information in April 1992. Reiterating the concerns she had expressed earlier in connection with document A/AC.198/1992/4, she asked why more than two thirds of the budget allocated to information centres were absorbed by 12 centres located in countries of the North, the remaining third being shared between 49 centres, which, incidentally were threatened with being placed under the tutelage of UNDP, and why financial contributions were requested from developing countries while wealthy countries did not have to contribute a penny. Information centres were like United Nations embassies to the developing countries. They were essential to the accomplishment of the Secretary-General's new tasks. Besides supporting Member States in their efforts to achieve development and to preserve peace, the United Nations presence also had a dissuasive effect, and the centres' directors could play an essential "preventive diplomacy" role in preventing conflicts. They should carry a reflection of some of the prestige surrounding the first international civil servant of whom they were the representatives.

15. In view of the multitude of tasks assigned to the Department of Public Information, her delegation was concerned by the slenderness of the means available to the Department and felt that some thought should be given, within the restructuring context, to ways and means of enabling the Department to fulfil its threefold function as a showcase of the United Nations, as the ambassador of the Secretary-General to Member States and as an effective tool for the promotion of a free and democratic press within a new international information and communciation order in the service of the well-being of mankind.

16. Mr. DAMICO (Brazil) expressed his delegation's concern in connection with the restructuring of the Department of Public Information and the changes made in the Department's mandate and in the scope of its operational activities,

(Mr. Damico, Brazil)

such as the incorporation of sectors of the former Office of Research and Collection of Information and the Publications Board. The Department's task was already a heavy one and committing its scarce resources to activities whose mandates had not yet been reviewed by the Committee on Information should be avoided. Until the present, the Department's activities had consisted mainly in promoting awareness of the work of the United Nations among the public at large. Henceforth, the Department apparently would be required to increase the Organization's awareness of political and other developments taking place in Member States, especially through the collection of information by United Nations Information Centres.

17. At the latest meeting of the Committee on Information members had stressed their commitment to the basic principles of General Assembly resolution 46/73 A on "Information in service of mankind". They had unanimously acknowledged that an unhindered flow of information was one of the premises of democratic societies and had recognized that a lower level of development had a negative impact on the capacity to disseminate or have access to information. They had recognized the need to redress the situation by furthering international cooperation, especially in the field of communication infrastructure.

18. His country had produced technologies capable of meeting international standards and was in a position to promote cooperation activities with other developing countries. His Government had made suggestions concerning the utilization of funds and the establishment of a system for information exchange on ongoing and planned projects supported by United Nations agencies.

19. With regard to the proposed fusion of United Nations Information Centres with UNDP field offices, he said that any action in that area should be reviewed by the Committee on Information and the General Assembly.

20. Another point that deserved close attention was that while some interim offices had recently been opened in Republics of the former Soviet Union, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/73 aimed at recapacitating existing information centres and opening new ones in Member States had not been implemented. The situation provided a good opportunity for determining whether decisions relating to information centres could be taken at the discretion of the Secretariat or were subject to the approval of the General Assembly.

21. In conclusion, he commended the Department of Public Information for its tireless efforts in publicizing the activities and results of the United Nations Confernece on Environment and Development and suggested that the Secretariat should issue a report containing an evaluation of the system-wide information programme for the Conference.

22. Mr. MZALE (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation welcomed the work accomplished by the Department in the course of the year. It had not merely fulfilled the tasks traditionally entrusted to it, despite limited resources and despite the increasing demands placed upon it, but had implemented the General Assembly resolutions on priority issues while endeavouring to confront the challenges created by the new climate of international relations.

23. None the less, much remained to be done. The new challenges facing the international community demanded fresh approaches and required the Department to adopt a new conceptual framework for assessing and organizing its future work. However, that situation was arising at a time when the Department's capacity to accommodate new demands was reaching its limits, and it was doubtful whether a more flexible approach to the deployment of limited resources and the integration of the information centres with field offices of UNDP would bring about significant improvements. On the contrary, it was to be feared that the growing demands placed by Member States on the Department, and its efforts to meet those requirements, would endanger the results achieved if they were not accompanied by the necessary resources. It was thus imperative that Member States pledged their full cooperation and financial support to the Department.

24. The Department was now going to have to carry out its activities in a period of change in which new challenges were appearing. In the past, information, controlled by the rich nations, had been constantly manipulated in order to serve the interests and prejudices of those countries and to suppress or marginalize any aspiration which might run counter to them. That inability to disseminate objective news in numerous areas in which humanity had been put to the test had led to countless sufferings and deaths. Currently, the market economy and the principles underlying the Western democracies were regarded as formulas to be universally applied in order to solve the inumerable problems facing humanity. It might be asked, however, what useful values and experience from the past would be neglected and rejected. What was certain was that information would play a role in that regard.

25. Disparities in the field of information and communication between developing and developed nations were highly damaging to humanity as a whole. Accordingly, cooperation between developed and developing countries in the interests of reducing inequalities in information flows, assistance in establishing the infrastructures and capabilities the developing countries needed to develop their own information and communication policies, and the principles of freedom of the press and information were of vital importance. For that reason the current system of communication and information, which was dominated by the developed countries and based on the values and interests of the industrailized nations, must be restructured in order to take full account of the values and interests of the developing countries.

26. Mr. YOUGH (Nigeria) said that the moral obligations entered into by the developed and the developing countries in the interests of cooperation aimed at reducing disparities in the fields of information and communication should not be overlooked. Assistance to the developing countries should therefore be increased in order to enable them to establish the necessary infrastructures in that field. In that connection, the Department should provide a contribution within the framework of its programme of assistance.

27. The United Nations Information Centres constituted a vital source of information for the developing countries. It was regrettable that the budgetary resources allocated to them were primarily made available to the information centres in the developed countries, whose citizens, most of the time, were not even aware of their existence, due to the presence of highly-developed public and private information media.

28. The decision to merge some information centres with UNDP field offices was of particular concern. Such a measure did not address the Department's financial problems, since the developing countries contributed substantially to financing the centres. Moreover, the measure would considerably reduce the centres' autonomy.

29. The Department should encourage the information centres by providing them with greater assistance. In particular, the resources available to the centres in Lagos, Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura should be increased, and the centre in Namibia should be made fully functional as soon as possible. The Department should also encourage the information centres in Africa and other developing regions to promote greater awareness of the socio-economic problems of those regions and their recovery and development efforts. Radio and television programmes should give more emphasis to the cultures of the various regions. There should also be budgetary financing for the periodical Africa Recovery, which was the Department's major publication on Africa.

30. His delegation welcomed the Department's cooperation with some regional media organizations, and it hoped that that could be extended to all regions. Such cooperation might make it possible to produce new radio and television programmes.

31. His delegation fully supported the draft resolution submitted by the Bureau of the Committee on Information (A/SPC/47/L.9), and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

32. Mrs. ESTEFAN (United States of America) congratulated the Committee on the excellent work that had been accomplished with regard to the draft resolution on information, which underscored the importance and necessity of freedom of the press and freedom of expression. She was pleased that the ideological conflict which had previously marked the Committee's work on questions relating to information was now in the past. It was time to undertake the practical reform needed to strengthen and streamline the

(Mrs. Estefan, United States)

Department of Public Information in such a way as to enhance efficiency at a time when there was increased public scrutiny of the United Nations, given the larger role it was taking in international affairs.

33. The Department of Information was clearly on the right track. It had accomplished a great deal of which it could be proud, particularly concerning the United Nations Information Centres (notably the efforts to integrate them with existing UNDP facilities, thereby minimizing operational costs), the Yearbook of the United Nations, the 1991 edition of which had just been published with the cooperation of a private publisher, and the United Nations information campaign against drug trafficking and drug abuse.

34. Those were examples of Department of Information activities which supported the information function in a cost-effective manner. The United States praised the efforts to consolidate the disparate elements of United Nations information work. Progress was being made, but there was much still to be done. The commitment to consolidation, cost savings and streamlining should be maintained.

35. The United States maintained its position that the Department of Public Information could undertake its important work while keeping costs within the existing budget. It wished to make a few suggestions on the subject: it should identify creative ways to fund United Nations programmes and activities through public and private partnerships, eliminate redundant publications, develop objectives and integrate United Nations Information Centres with other United Nations field offices, particularly those of UNDP.

36. Her delegation also had some comments to make: the Department of Information required greater budgetary flexibility, particularly in the present time of rapid global change, in order to be able to respond without delay; United Nations radio programming should be emphasized, as it was a cost-effective way to further understanding of United Nations programmes and policies; and programme development for the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations should begin immediately.

37. Mr. KA (Senegal) said that, at a time when the remarkable methods of communication now available had effectively made the world smaller and when, even within individual States, people demanded to be informed about, and closely involved in, the management of their affairs, it was understandable that access to information and the possibility of communication represented a legitimate quest for all peoples and all nations. The new climate of international relations resulting from recent political and economic changes had meant that people previously divided by a wall of prejudices and a lack of understanding had been brought much closer. That climate called on all peoples to engage more in cooperation and exchanges of information and to show a willingness to participate actively in forming public opinion the world over.

(Mr. Ka, Senegal)

38. That did not mean, however, that all countries were able to contribute as they would like to the establishment of the new information and communications order which had been advocated for several years. In fact, in view of the structural imbalances and increasingly acute disparities in the levels of development of different States, the current wide disproportion in the diffusion of information was not surprising. Whoever mastered technological innovations in information clearly controlled the floor, content and direction of that information, and was fully able to regulate and convey the message in question. That being so, the developing countries, and Africa in particular, could not really contribute to the new information order unless they had better access to such advanced technologies, so that they could convey their message.

39. Recourse to information and communications was vital if Africa's energies were to be released and channelled into development and the building of democratic States. Information and the right of citizens to be informed were now key aspirations and demands in terms of development and participatory democracy. In that sense, Senegal had welcomed the Windhoek Seminar for the development of the African press, held in May 1991, and had supported the Declaration of Windhoek, which, in its opinion, constituted significant progress and an important step towards an independent and pluralistic African press. Following the second seminar, held in Kazakhstan in October 1992, his delegation believed that further seminars should be organized in other parts of the world, as such meetings helped to improve the capacity for communication between developing countries and to train journalists in those countries in the latest available techniques.

40. Senegal had ensured that its people always enjoyed freedom of the press and the best illustration of that was that it had a high court, presided over by an independent magistrate, which dealt with audio-visual matters. He welcomed the excellent relations between the United Nations Information Centre in Dakar and the Senegalese authorities, and pointed out that at the centre's request, the Senegalese Minister of Culture had recently decided to dedicate the second Biennial of the Arts of Senegal to human rights in order to commend the positive contribution made by the United Nations to the world-wide promotion of those rights, and that the centre had recently participated in a public debate on the dissemination of the document entitled "An Agenda for peace".

41. His delegation wished to take the opportunity to thank all members of the Committee on Information who had supported and recommended that the General Assembly should approve the candidacy of Senegal and that of the Republic of Korea, for membership in that Committee.

42. Senegal was perfectly aware of the enormous difficulties facing the Organization, particularly the Department of Public Information, which found itself dealing with an increasing volume and variety of requests. In its efforts to enhance efficiency, that Department should, bearing in mind

equitable geographical distribution, redeploy its resources and reorganize some of its services in order to maximize their performance. While his delegation understood the concerns recently expressed by the Secretary-General with respect to restructuring, it was nevertheless somewhat apprehensive about the idea of integrating United Nations Information Centres with the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme. In that regard, Senegal supported the recommendation of the Committee on Information at its fourteenth session to request the submission of a detailed report on the issue before taking any decisions.

43. His delegation had also considered with interest the report of the Commiteee on Information, and it commended the remarkable work accomplished by the Department of Public Information between the two sessions of the Committee. The Department had provided the world with good coverage of the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development and of the historic Security Council summit-level meeting. However, Senegal would like the Department to be more aggressive and to anticipate events so that the international community could be informed in time for it to be able to take the emergency preventive measures required by some situations. The terrible events in Yugoslavia, the tragedy in Somalia and the dire situation in Liberia should be continuously and fully reported to the world, so that appropriate measures could be adopted.

44. The Department of Public Information should also do more to inform international public opinion about the encouraging results achieved by African leaders in their efforts to improve economic performance and bring about stability through the democratization of political systems and thus successfully negotiate the political and economic transition in which most African countries were currently engaged. There was another priority in addition to that dual transition: African economic integration, which would open new windows of opportunity for foreign investors in Africa.

45. He renewed his delegation's support for the activities of UNESCO, which had always been geared to strengthening the communication capacities of developing countries within the framework of the International Programme for Development of Communication. That important Programme deserved support because it helped to reduce the imbalance in the one-way flow of information.

46. Mr. POSSO SERRANO (Ecuador) stressed the importance of information and communication in familiarizing world public opinion with the work of the Organization, especially at a time of unprecedented expansion of the United Nations role in world peace and security and other new sectors. The Organization was active both in its traditional areas - for example, correcting historical wrongs sucn as colonialism and racism - and in new fields, such as the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking. The United Nations had always done extremely important work as far as respect for human rights and the strengthening of democracies was concerned. It was demonstrating, especially now, that information was really in the service of

(Mr. Posso Serrano, Ecuador)

humanity, in line with the terms of a consensus achieved two years previously which had established the guidelines for the development of information both in individual countries and in the international community as a whole.

47. One of the important aspects of the Organization's work in that area was to promote a social communication capability in developing countries, in order to lay down the foundations for a new world information and communication order based on mutual trust and the will of all States. The mandate in that regard was not only ethical but was also founded on pragmatism. Its aim was to support and encourage the new world order in order to combat the abuses of the multinational news agencies, disinformation and manipulation of information and other social communication vices. Individual countries must be supported by the international community as a whole in their efforts to eliminate such defects.

48. Whereas the efforts and resources required to achieve that new order would be too much for individual countries to handle, genuine international cooperation would overcome such obstacles. International cooperation was undoubtedly a useful instrument for Ecuador and other third world countries in that it enabled them to compensate for the imbalances stemming from the disparity between the technical capabilities and the resources of countries and to fight against the abuses and distortions of information. The United Nations and the specialized agencies could play the most important role in that connection.

49. Obviously, the consensus that had been achieved two years previously must be preserved, as it constituted an appropriate and balanced framework of principles that reflected the main trends and major requirements of the new international communication order. The Secretary-General had already outlined what had to be done as a result of that consensus: the work must be continued and the strategy of the Department of Public Information must be defined more clearly; the Department of Public Information must be organized in a flexible enough manner to respond to public information requirements at the world level. To achieve that, the Department must have the necessary specialists and equipment.

50. The United Nations Information Centres must be mechanisms for executing the Organization's information policies and not administrative arms whose sole purpose would be to distribute publications. The siting of such centres should neither be the subject of struggles for influence among Member States nor an indication of the status of the host countries. The facilities offered by modern technology and public information resources should make it possible to avoid the proliferation of such centres as simple, poorly equipped and even sometimes superfluous administrative units.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
21st meeting
held on
19 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. KHOUINI	(Tunisia)
later:	Mr. FUENTES-IBAÑEV (Vice-Chairman)	(Bolivia)
later:	Mr. KHOUINI (Chairman)	(Tunisia)

CONTENTS

PROGRAMME PLANNING

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

92-57881 6347S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.21
25 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

PROGRAMME PLANNING (A/SPC/47/L.12)

1. The CHAIRMAN informed members of the Committee that a letter from the Chairman of the Special Political Committee to the Chairman of the Fifth Committee regarding agenda item 105, "Programme Planning", had been circulated in document A/SPC/47/L.12.

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10)

(a) REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION (A/47/21)

(b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/47/462)

2. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to a letter (A/SPC/47/4) from the Permanent Representative of Namibia transmitting the text of the Declaration of Windhoek on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, which had been adopted at the United Nations/UNESCO seminar held in Windhoek, Namibia, from 29 April to 3 May, 1991.

3. Miss LOPEZ SOMOZA (Argentina) said that the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information and communication had been an indissoluble part of Argentine society since the beginning of the country's political life and were reflected in the national Constitution. Argentina noted with satisfaction that those principles were reflected in the Committee's resolutions.

4. Great and decisive changes had lately affected the international community and were reflected in the work of the United Nations, as was witnessed by the fact that the Committee had begun to discuss preventive diplomacy, peace-building and peace-keeping on the basis of the Secretary-General's Agenda for peace (A/47/277). The Department of Public Information (DPI) was playing, as it should, an important role in that new situation, for there was more than ever a need to make the world aware of United Nations activities relating to international security and economic and social development.

5. The United Nations information centres were important to the future work of the Committee and the Department. The theme of information on peace-keeping operations was of great importance. In Argentina, as in many other countries whose forces took part in such operations, there was a great desire for up-to-date information on them. In Argentina's view there were two main aspects to the question. First, peace-keeping operations should include specialists in information management and the information should be channelled rapidly to Headquarters to be disseminated. Secondly, information on peace-keeping operations should be made available to the international

(Miss Lopez Somoza, Argentina)

community, in particular to countries contributing troops. Action should be taken urgently on both aspects by the Department, which had the ultimate responsibility in the matter.

6. Mr. Fuentes-Ibañez (Bolivia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

7. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakhstan) said that, from a study of the Secretary-General's report (A/47/462) and the report of the Committee on Information (A/SPC/47/21), it was clear to her delegation that Member States and organizations in the United Nations system attached considerable importance to the role of information in international cooperation.

8. The reports presented an impressive picture of the Organization's information activities in support of international peace and security, human rights, economic and social development, environmental protection and the broad range of other areas in which the United Nations was active.

9. In his address to the General Assembly, the President of Kazakhstan had stressed the growing role of the United Nations in a post-cold war world and noted the need for a new level of coordination of the efforts of the entire world community in responding to the challenges of the future. The present circumstances of dramatic global change had once again highlighted the role of information in helping the world realize the lofty goals of the United Nations Charter and make the United Nations an agent for effective cooperation in the name of peace and progress.

10. In that context, the signing of an agreement by Kazakhstan's President and the Secretary-General on the establishment of a United Nations Interim Office in Alma Ata was a highly symbolic event. One of the main tasks of the office would be the dissemination of information regarding the activities of the Organization and the efforts of the international community in ensuring political stability, preserving the global environment and nurturing stable economic and social development.

11. The joint United Nations/UNESCO seminar on the development of independent and pluralistic mass media in Asia held in Alma Ata had addressed a number of professional, economic, social and legal questions, as well as factors promoting the development of independent media. Participants had endorsed a declaration in which they announced their full support for the basic principles of the Windhoek Declaration and reaffirmed their adherence to those principles in the struggle for free, independent and pluralistic media in all regions of the world, and had also worked out a package of draft proposals for the stable development of independent and pluralistic mass media. Kazakhstan, as a newly independent State, attached particular importance to the Declaration's provisions concerning assistance programmes for the training of specialists and the enhancement of the technical capabilities of information agencies throughout central Asia.

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

12. As a State which had embarked upon a course of radical democratic and economic change, Kazakhstan recognized the pre-eminent importance of the individual freedoms reaffirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other generally recognized norms of international law. In order to guarantee those freedoms, the draft constitution of Kazakhstan contained two articles recognizing freedom of speech, freedom of belief, the free expression of beliefs and the right to receive and disseminate information by all legal means.

13. Kazakhstan was reaffirming its commitment to the goals and principles of the United Nations Charter by striving to make a constructive contribution in all areas of the Organization's activities, including the area of information. To that end, her Government was prepared to cooperate on a broad basis with other member States, specialized agencies within the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

14. Mr. VALDEZ (Cuba) said that the significance of the growing consensus within the Committee on Information on the draft resolutions it adopted should not be overestimated. The item under consideration encompassed not only the information activities of the United Nations but also global information patterns and trends, and there the gap between the informational capabilities of the developed and the third world countries had, if anything, widened. The United Nations was far from achieving the goals it had set when it had envisaged the new world information and communication order.

15. The underdeveloped countries could do little to preserve their values, culture and chosen systems when the only option available to them was to engage in an unequal struggle with the great information monopolies of the developed countries, which had virtually inexhaustible resources with which to sell the viewpoints of their own societies.

16. At a time of supposed new promise for lasting peace and mutually beneficial international cooperation, actions were being taken that not only violated basic principles of international law but also ran counter to the Organization's information goals. The most obvious example was the aggressive and subversive television and radio broadcasting beamed at Cuba by the United States of America, which violated the International Telecommunication Convention and had provoked reprimands by the International Frequency Registration Board. The Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries at their latest Summit Conference had asked the United States to cease such hostile radio and television transmission since it was contrary to international law and to good neighbourliness, and the Secretary-General had at the same meeting warned that decolonization and the disappearance of power blocs had not eliminated the temptation of world or regional domination.

17. The transnational information agencies more often than not used their information monopoly to stifle any attempts by the third world to make its

(Mr. Valdez, Cuba)

voice heard, for they relied on the one-way flow of information, under the guise of freedom of expression, to impose their alien perception of the world.

18. Cuba reiterated its concern that attempts might be made, through the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for 1992-1997, to use United Nations public information or data-gathering activities or the activities of the United Nations information centres abroad to violate the principles of State sovereignty and of non-interference in internal affairs. Cuba itself would continue working with and within the United Nations to achieve the objectives of the new international information and communication order.

19. Mr. BHAGAT (India) said that free media were a catalyst for human freedom, endeavour and development, both on a national and a global scale. His own country was proud of its unrestricted, pluralistic and active press, which was a pillar of its democratic system and a vehicle for economic progress. India welcomed the recent seminars DPI had been holding on the promotion of independent and pluralistic media, and would be happy to share its experience in the matter with the Department.

20. The welcome and growing consensus in the Committee on Information had led to a commitment to enhancing the free flow of information and reducing the disparities between developed and developing countries while improving the latter's capability to disseminate information. To remedy the serious global imbalance that existed in the field of information, advanced technological communication infrastructures had to be established in the developing countries, so that they could put across their views, achievements and aspirations in the international media. In itself, that would be a very desirable global manifestation of pluralism. Support should therefore be given to programmes such as the UNESCO-administered International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), along with direct assistance to the developing world in the field of information.

21. One of the more contentious issues addressed by the Committee on Information had been the role of the United Nations information centres. While noting with interest the Secretary-General's proposal to integrate the centres at a number of stations with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) field offices, as part of a laudable effort to streamline operations and promote cost-effective management, India believed that care should be taken to ensure that such merging did not affect the functional autonomy of the information components in their specialized tasks, and there should be an assessment of the effectiveness of such interim joint offices as well as of the 21 centres currently headed by UNDP representatives.

22. The renewed reliance on the United Nations by its Member States had placed new demands on DPI to promote an informed understanding of the purposes of the Organization. The Department had begun to respond to the urgent challenges before it and should continue trying to make optimal use of its limited

(Mr. Bhagat, India)

resources. An increasingly important part of its extensive activities had come to be the dissemination of information on peace-keeping operations. It had played a notable role in several multi-dimensional and integrated peace-keeping operations, like those in El Salvador and Cambodia, by launching major educational and information campaigns that had been substantive aspects of the United Nations functioning in those countries. DPI had also run excellent public information campaigns for major United Nations events such as the Conference on Environment and Development in Rio, which had resulted in increased awareness of the vital issues involved.

23. DPI had, in addition, very effectively maintained liaison with the world media at Headquarters through press briefings and releases, an aspect of its work that should not be underestimated. The Department's recent publication of the World Media Handbook and its efforts to reduce the backlog in its other reference publications were encouraging. Its radio broadcasts in various languages and its videos and films were a valuable source of information. Moreover, the public opinion surveys its conducted in various Member States, allowing the United Nations to target its output and evaluate its usefulness, were an important component of the Organization's information strategy. Another good means of generating grass-roots support for the United Nations was the active collaboration of DPI with selected non-governmental organizations. In all its work, the Department must hold to high standards of balance, objectivity and tolerance for the diverse values that made up the universal ethos. Freedom implied freedom for all to inform and be informed, and that should remain the aim.

24. Mr. ALSAIDI (Yemen) said that it was incumbent upon the developed world to redress the imbalance between it and the developing countries by helping them overcome their structural and institutional deficiencies. The right to a free flow of information was a fundamental right of every citizen. Thus, a vibrant free press had mushroomed across Yemen since reunification.

25. His delegation viewed with admiration the cooperation between DPI and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in connection with the joint United Nations/UNESCO seminar held in Alma Ata (A/SPC/47/3). A similar meeting should be held to encourage a free and pluralistic press in the Middle East, and Yemen would be more than happy to assist in that regard.

26. The establishment of United Nations interim offices with information components in the States of the Commonwealth of Independent States was to be of vital importance. He wished to stress, however, the supremacy of General Assembly resolutions and the recommendations of the Committee on Information over administrative decisions.

27. Yemen welcomed the initiation of the process to establish the United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/73 B; it would extend all possible assistance to the Secretariat

(Mr. Alsaidi, Yemen)

in that connection, and expected in return the full and unambiguous implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on Information and General Assembly resolution 46/73 B, including the appointment of an experienced director for the centre, who would be expected to work in harmony with the UNDP Resident Representative in Sana'a.

28. His delegation commended the education campaign undertaken by DPI on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, as well as the situation in South Africa. The Department should not cease to educate world public opinion as to the oppression and suffering inflicted on the peoples of Palestine and South Africa until they obtained their right to self-determination.

29. Mr. POPESCU (Romania) said that, after moving rapidly and irreversibly to a totally free exchange of views both in the streets and in the mass media two years previously, Romania had fostered independent, pluralistic media. It had enacted legislation to encourage fair competition, diversity and entrepreneurship in the field of information, and to guarantee free expression and a free flow of information, while outlawing censorship. More than 12,000 daily newspapers and periodicals were printed in Romania, in the languages of ethnic minorities as well, and most were privately owned. Radio and television stations had also multiplied, many of them private. Further steps were being considered for a better integration of Romanian media with the main international information networks.

30. His delegation commended the high professionalism with which DPI was meeting the dramatically increased demands for better coverage of United Nations activities. Its materials were the main source of an understanding of the United Nations presence in the world, and were received with great interest by the public. The streamlining of the Department should not result in any reduction of its functions. DPI could, in fact, expand its contributions in certain areas, such as developing communication infrastructures in countries requesting such assistance, training specialized personnel, and organizing seminars and workshops for a broader spectrum of journalists. The UNESCO-administered IPDC was also making a contribution to the freedom, independence and pluralism of the press, as had the relevant Windhoek and Alma Ata Declarations. Non-governmental organizations and public or private foundations were more interested in assisting regional initiatives, as they should be.

31. Romania appreciated the spirit of compromise that had again prevailed in the Committee on Information and supported the proposed enlargement of its membership. A hotly debated issue had been the functioning of the United Nations information centres. The Secretary-General had put forward an interesting proposal to integrate them with other United Nations offices, and the 10-year experience with the information centre in Bucharest, which was coordinated by the UNDP representative, indicated that the option was viable. That Centre was doing well in disseminating information on United Nations

(Mr. Popescu, Romania)

activities, and it received regular financial and other support from his Government. The Centre's responsibilities were constantly expanding, but a problem had arisen with other United Nations agencies that requested its services but were unwilling to help pay for them.

32. Romania urged the adoption by consensus of the draft resolutions and draft decision before the Committee.

33. Mr. MAUNG (Myanmar) commended the extensive and comprehensive efforts of DPI in providing timely information for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The actual news coverage of the Conference itself also deserved special commendation. Moreover, DPI deserved to be congratulated for having updated the Yearbook of the United Nations for the first time in decades. However, the decision not to continue publication of Development Forum beyond 1992 was most regrettable; his delegation would join with other like-minded Member States in urging the Department to continue publication of Development Forum while the search for a solution to the financial difficulties of the publication was under way.

34. Human resources development in the information area was essential to help developing countries acquire technical expertise. Consideration should therefore be given to the possibility of expanding the programme, as the broadcasters and journalists who had participated in the 1991 programme had expressed great appreciation for it.

35. The United Nations information centres played an essential role in promoting awareness and understanding of the work and purposes of the Organization among the peoples of the world. While Myanmar did not object in principle to the idea of integrating them with UNDP offices, that was a matter which required careful study, taking due account of the decisions and priorities identified by Member States. Cooperation between Myanmar and the United Nations information centre in Yangon had increased significantly during 1992.

36. The new challenges facing the world community as a result of the end of the cold war and the growing interdependence of nations were highlighting the importance of information and communication. At the same time, however, the present world information order remained singularly deficient. Because of disparities in technology and resources, the flow of information remained one-sided. The developed countries, while accounting for less than 15 per cent of the world's population, nevertheless enjoyed a virtual monopoly on the gathering and dissemination of information that placed the developing nations at a distinct disadvantage. Moreover, due to the unidirectional flow of information, the world had not been able fully to enjoy the richness of the cultures, traditions and experiences of developing countries. In an age when timely and accurate information was necessary to make the right decisions, positive developments in the developing countries remained largely unnoticed, while unpleasant news from there received immediate attention. Some media

(Mr. Maung, Myanmar)

reports emanating from developed countries were of a biased or prejudiced nature, as their interpretations of events were based largely on the values and attitudes of the developed world without regard for the realities of the situation. Regrettably, world opinion about developing countries was sometimes shaped by reports which were sometimes at variance with the truth.

37. Although freedom of information was a universally accepted principle, there were many instances when it had been misused in order to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries through, for example, the provision of media facilities to groups engaged in anti-State activities against sovereign nations. Such actions were contrary to the principles of the 1981 United Nations Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty.

38. Efforts to build a new international order should be accompanied by equally active efforts to construct a new international information and communication order, based on the observance of the principles of the United Nations Charter as well as respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and social and cultural values of all States. The new order must also aim at reducing the disparity between the developed and developing countries with respect to information, while at the same time promoting international understanding and cooperation.

39. Myanmar was in the process of transforming its political and economic systems to create a multi-party democratic State with a market-oriented economy. A similar change was also occurring in the administrative and social fields, including the field of information. Relying mainly on its own resources, his Government had taken steps to improve and expand its existing information and communications network, using satellite technology. The activities of the United Nations in combating drug abuse, protecting the environment and improving public health were frequent topics. With respect to print media, the number of newspapers had more than doubled and the number and range of private publications had dramatically expanded. In addition, public libraries were being established throughout the country, even in remote rural areas, in order to encourage reading.

40. Mr. ZHANG WANHAI (China) said that in addition to disseminating to the whole world information about the work of the United Nations, DPI should also promote information exchange between the United Nations and its Member States, as well as among Member States themselves.

41. To narrow the information gap between developed and developing countries, it was essential to strengthen the information and communication infrastructure in developing countries and promote the establishment of a more equitable and effective new world information and communication order which respected the sovereignty of all States, as well as the cultural traditions and social values of people in different countries.

(Mr. Zhang Wanhai, China)

42. His delegation noted with satisfaction that DPI had made diligent efforts to carry out priority programmes approved by the General Assembly, and had done a great deal to disseminate information about United Nations activities for the maintenance of world peace and security and the promotion of economic and social progress. In particular, his delegation welcomed the considerable progress made in the publication of the Yearbook of the United Nations. The Department should continue its efforts and make, in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions, new appraisals of its priorities and distribution of financial resources so as to be more cost-effective and achieve better results. At the same time, he also wished to stress that in filling its vacancies, DPI should apply more comprehensively the principle of equal regional distribution and give more consideration to candidates from under-represented regions and developing countries.

43. The Chinese Government, which attached great importance to the deliberations on questions relating to information, had endeavoured to enhance the cause of information and its dissemination in China. It was willing to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and other countries through multilateral and bilateral channels, and would continue its efforts to widen public knowledge within China of the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and to deepen understanding, among the people of the world, of China's programme of reform and opening up to the outside world.

44. Mr. KARAMOY (Indonesia) said that the new spirit of mutual conciliation had renewed hopes for a more equitable order for all mankind. The post-cold-war period had yielded consensus on a number of issues and the opportunity to find solutions to long-standing disputes. Information and communication were indispensable to the promotion of better understanding among all countries, but there was a need to change the dependent status of developing countries in that field. The Committee should help those Member States develop effective communication infrastructures.

45. The consensus reached on draft resolutions A and B (A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10) provided a unique opportunity for the Organization to emphasize the critical importance of equitable participation of all Member States in the emerging new world information and communication order. It should take advantage of the improved international political climate and seek to remove the inequalities inherent in the information and communication system. He drew attention to the relevant paragraphs adopted by the Tenth Summit Meeting of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Jakarta in September 1992, regarding the need to establish the new order.

46. The non-aligned countries had undertaken programmes based on collective self-reliance to overcome impediments to their wider interaction in information and communication. They had assiduously sought ways to strengthen cooperative measures between UNESCO, UNDP, IPDC, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and DPI, on the one hand, and the Non-Aligned News Agencies Pool, as well their own broadcasting organizations, on the other.

(Mr. Karamoy, Indonesia)

47. Indonesia had long recognized the crucial role of information and communication in its social and economic progress and that of all third world countries, and had endeavoured to enhance cooperation on a multilateral, regional and bilateral basis. It had also carried out communication and information training programmes for media personnel from the Asian Pacific and African regions through the organization Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

48. His delegation appreciated the Department's activities and was gratified by its endeavours to disseminate objective information on apartheid, the Palestine question and important economic and social issues. Despite its financial constraints, the Department had, through the network of United Nations information centres, played an important role in responding to and understanding local needs and interests. His delegation was fully satisfied with the work of the Jakarta Centre and would like to underscore the importance of the annual training courses conducted by the Department for broadcasters and journalists from developing nations; it also hoped that the cooperation between the Department and non-aligned news agencies would be further strengthened.

49. Mr. SEDLAK (Czechoslovakia) said that freedom of the press and freedom of speech had become a guarantee of democracy and of a secure world. The confrontational character of discussions in the Committee on Information had been replaced, he hoped forever, by fruitful international cooperation. His delegation was convinced that the consensus would be maintained in the Special Political Committee and in the General Assembly.

50. The Windhoek seminar on the development of an independent and pluralistic press in Africa had been successful and inspiring; his delegation also welcomed the declaration issued by the United Nations/UNESCO seminar in Alma Ata in October 1992 and fully supported the proclamation of 3 May as Press Freedom Day. Czechoslovakia supported all international programmes and projects aimed at strengthening the communications infrastructures of the developing countries. However, the developing world needed neither monstrous projects nor bureaucratic approaches, but rather purposeful and coordinated activity.

51. Czechoslovakia welcomed the integration of appropriate United Nations information centres with UNDP offices while maintaining their functional autonomy. They should also serve as information-gathering centres, thus becoming an important part of the system of preventive diplomacy.

52. A free and independent press, radio and television had in the past months pressed for a just solution of regional conflicts. Hundreds and thousands of journalists had risked their lives in crisis areas and tens and hundreds of them had died fulfilling their professional duties. Therefore, the international community should intervene in the interest of journalists' security so as to protect their health and lives. Only a coordinated international effort could provide journalists with the necessary safeguards.

(Mr. Sedlak, Czechoslovakia)

53. Few things were so important to democracy as guaranteed and realized freedom of speech and freedom of the press. Czechoslovakia had opened itself to the world and no longer imposed any legislative restrictions that could in any way hinder free and diversified information contacts with foreign countries. Pertinent legislation respected all standards usual in democratic countries and created the preconditions for a gradual accession by Czechoslovakia to international conventions and agreements in the field of information, communication and free information exchange. He reiterated that after the cessation of the current Czechoslovak Federation on 1 January 1993, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic would take over all obligations and commitments arising from existing agreements.

54. Free, independent and pluralistic information could guarantee the existence of the democratic order within a given State; a free international exchange of information thus created the preconditions for the existence of normal, correct and civilized relations between partners in the international community. Information was an attribute of a secure world and a carrier of international solidarity; a more secure and trustworthy world could not be an uninformed one.

55. Mr. SALAS (Mexico) said that, because of the central role played by the United Nations in the profound transformations that were taking place in the world, the work of DPI had taken on a political significance which it had never had before. To that situation must be added the fact that the outlook for freedom of press and information had improved in several different regions of the world. His delegation therefore held the view that at its next session, the Committee on Information should take further steps in the conceptual development of the ideas set forth in its draft resolution A, (A/SPC/47/L.9), which he hoped would be adopted by consensus.

56. The Special Political Committee should give priority to the consideration of those activities of DPI which had been affected by the changes on the international political scene. Thus, the information centres had a new role to play, both in political and in practical terms. They should avoid any activity that might imply interference in questions which fell strictly within the internal competence of States. The possibility of integrating some information centres with other United Nations offices should take into account not only the administrative changes involved but also the conceptual aspect. In order to maintain the functional independence and the operational character of the centres, they must be viewed as the new voices of an organization that was undergoing a process of evolution. That was a difficult task, and the Committee on Information must approach it with great care.

57. The increase in the number and complexity of peace-keeping operations was a reflection of the changes taking place in the United Nations. His delegation wished to express its appreciation of the work done by the spokespersons for the peace-keeping operations, who should be provided with adequate support in the field. Information from the operational centres was

(Mr. Salas, Mexico)

fundamental in order to make it possible to anticipate problems, correct mistakes and avoid future difficulties.

58. His delegation also appreciated the work done by the correspondents assigned to United Nations Headquarters, who should be provided with the necessary facilities to enable them to perform their increasingly demanding tasks. Their voices must be heard within DPI.

59. Ms. ESTEFAN (United States of America), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the United States and other open societies welcomed free expression of views by radio or any other means. Recalling that article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stressed the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers, she said that in support of peoples' right to know, the Voice of America (VOA) had been broadcasting for decades, and has become a respected source of information in societies where that right had been denied. The United States extended to other international radio voices the right to broadcast within allotted frequencies. Her Government did no jamming and made no other effort to silence those voices, even when they were critical or spread disinformation. Her delegation believed that no Government should censor or control the freedom of expression.

60. Mr. VALDES (Cuba), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that his Government had on many occasions expressed its willingness to establish an equitable and unconditional bilateral exchange of information with the United States. What his delegation objected to, as it had on previous occasions, was the fact that the United States Government had taken upon itself the right to transmit unilaterally to his country television and radio programmes that were subversive in content and were directed exclusively to a pre-selected audience, whose access to information would be determined by the United States.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
22nd meeting
held on
Friday, 20 November 1992
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FUENTES-IBANEZ (Bolivia)
(Vice-Chairman)

later: (Tunisia)

Mr. KHOUINI
(Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 75: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

92-57917 6356S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.22
25 November 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

/...

In the absence of Mr. Khouini (Tunisia), Mr. Fuentes-Ibanez (Bolivia) Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 75: COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE WHOLE QUESTION OF PEACE-KEEPING OPERATIONS IN ALL THEIR ASPECTS (A/SPC/47/L.7, L.8 and L.11) (continued)

1. Mrs. TAHIR-KHELI (United States of America), speaking in explanation of her delegation's vote on draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.7 before the vote, said she was pleased that the draft resolution offered the positive suggestions with regard to financing contained in paragraphs 15, 17 and 18. Her delegation also wished to note that, in its view, paragraph 13 was intended to call on nations to observe the principles and guidelines covering the financing of United Nations peace-keeping operations, and that nothing contained in the paragraph should be interpreted to discourage the consideration or implementation of improvements that would add to the solid financial foundation that was essential to United Nations peace-keeping operations.

2. Draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.7 was adopted without a vote.

3. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) announced that her delegation had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.8.

4. Draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.8 was adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (A/47/21, A/47/462 and Corr.1; A/SPC/47/L.9, L.10* and L.13) (continued)

5. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that document A/SPC/47/L.13 set out the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.10.

6. Mr. KHANDOGY (Ukraine) said that the past year had seen profound qualitative changes in the world and therefore in the United Nations. The task of the Organization's information services was to make known and understandable the depth and significance of those changes and thus to assist in the integration of the new States into the world community. Many of the young democracies were going through a difficult transition and some had become an arena of acute conflict between nationalities which threatened the political stability of their region. The world community could help them to overcome their difficulties by providing objective information on what was going on and supporting the reform process within them.

7. One of the important channels through which that work could be carried out was the system of United Nations information centres. His country was prepared to participate in the work of providing reliable information to the new democratic Member States through those centres, and could do so usefully

(Mr. Khandogy, Ukraine)

in view of its geographic proximity to and its ethnic, linguistic and cultural affinities with the peoples of many of them.

8. In view of the importance of information in the context he had just mentioned, his delegation would request the Department of Public Information (DPI) to consider the possibility of establishing a system-wide information programme for new Member States and plans for support to States' information structures. In that connection, his delegation placed great hope in the new UNDP offices opened in many of those States, including Ukraine.

9. Ukraine's information services had in a short time acquired the principles and values of the democratic press, and grown considerably thanks in large part to the help the country had received in developing its information infrastructure from other countries and from private donors. The positive results of that cooperation had made it possible for the Ukrainian media to act as equal partners in subregional and regional information structures. Unfortunately, however, the further development of those structures was being hindered by problems connected with the apportionment of the huge information resources of the previous all-Union media, all of which had been inherited by the Russian Federation. From that point of view, it was very important that the provisions of the General Assembly resolution entitled "Information in service of humanity" (resolution 46/23) be fully implemented.

10. His delegation also felt that the danger of the influence of unobjective and sometimes provocative information have been underestimated, and agreed that there was a need to combat it. Censorship was, of course, out of the question, but his delegation was convinced of the need to involve the United Nations more actively in the work of combating such anti-humane information and felt that the Committee on Information might well give attention to that problem.

11. Mr. TRUONG TRIEU DUONG (Viet Nam) said that the new world situation was opening up new opportunities for, but at the same time presenting acute challenges to, the peace, security and prosperity of the whole international community. Peace and development remained the two major issues confronting the people of all countries. Since there was a close link between communication and development, the need for countries both to improve their own communication and information capabilities and to increase contacts with other countries had become increasingly urgent. However, a gap still existed between the rich and the poor countries in terms of information and communication. The flow of information tended to go in only one direction, and that had not only positive but many negative effects on the poor countries which were the majority. That imbalance must be redressed.

12. Against that backdrop, the need for the establishment of a more balanced and effective new world information and communication order had become all the more urgent. Such a new order must respect the cultural and social values of all States and the identity and sovereignty of all nations. It should

(Mr. Truong Trieu Duong, Viet Nam)

genuinely facilitate the free flow of information which helped strengthen international peace and security and promote mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation among nations. Attempts to use the media to distort the facts or impose one's will on another did not serve those aims and must be rejected. Special attention and greater assistance, especially through transfer of technology and sharing of professional expertise, should be given to developing countries for the development of their communication infrastructures and capabilities.

13. In that context the United Nations, which was uniquely placed to provide global solutions to global problems, must assume a more important role. In fact, the United Nations system had proved to have enormous potential for promoting cooperation in the field of information and communication. For years, UNESCO had made serious efforts towards that end, and his delegation wished to express once again its support of those efforts and of UNESCO's activities to assist developing countries in the promotion of their communications capacities, particularly under the International Programme for the Development of Communication. It also encouraged DPI to break new ground in helping to contribute to the establishment of a new world information and communications order and to increase its cooperation with UNESCO. In that connection, his delegation commended the Department's efforts to enhance its increasingly important role in public information activities as well as its work in implementing General Assembly resolutions on priority issues. It was pleased to note DPI's efforts to ensure timely dissemination of its materials on those issues, but felt that it should also give high priority to providing countries, especially the developing countries which did not have information centres, with more information materials and other necessary assistance. It also attached importance to DPI's training programme for broadcasters and journalists and hoped that more opportunities would be provided for Vietnamese professionals to participate in future programmes.

14. His delegation also shared the concern expressed by others with regard to the continuing imbalance of the geographical distribution of posts within the department, particularly at the middle and higher levels. The Department should give more attention to redressing that situation, and higher priority must be given to countries like his own which remained unrepresented.

15. Viet Nam was committed to the freedoms of information, opinion and expression and had demonstrated that commitment both in words and in deeds. The Vietnamese Government attached great importance to the development of the mass media. It was making every effort to acquire advanced technology for the development of its national information and communication system and, thanks to those efforts, the mass media had become a strong force that contributed greatly to the renovation and process of renewal and development taking place in Viet Nam.

16. While recognizing and encouraging freedom of expression and opinion, his delegation shared the concern expressed about the use of radio and television

(Mr. Truong Trieu Duong, Viet Nam)

broadcast from some countries solely for hostile purposes against others. It was its view that genuine freedom of information in the press must be accompanied by a sense of responsibility in order to avoid producing and disseminating disinformation and misleading opinion. That freedom implied freedom for all to inform and be informed accurately and objectively. Any attempt to abuse that freedom or ignore its abuse must be strongly denounced.

17. Mr. Fhouini (Tunisia) took the Chair.

18. Mr. MONGBE (Benin) said that it was difficult to imagine how a country aspiring for a better life for its people could possibly attain that goal without creating the conditions necessary for a free and pluralistic press. As a State which had recently restored democracy and the rule of law after a 10-year hiatus, Benin recognized the important role of a free press in promoting democracy and development. That was why his Government endorsed the conclusions of the report of the Committee on Information regarding the establishment of a new world information and communication order and the practical actions which the Organization could take in the field of public information. As the course of world events was unpredicatable the Committee's consensus should not be regarded as an end in itself, but rather a point of departure for future debate concerning the mandate of DPI.

19. Despite many statements to the contrary, it was clear that the gap between the developed and developing countries with respect to information capabilities was widening every day. Benin, therefore welcomed the initiative of UNESCO - through its International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) - to help countries of limited means improve their communications infrastructures. However, he noted that the Programme's activities had been hampered recently by a lack of resources. He also welcomed the Declaration of the Windhoek Seminar on the Development of an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, and expressed the hope that future seminars could be organized in other regions of the developing world. In addition, his Government supported the proposal of UNESCO to proclaim 3 May Press Freedom Day.

20. Benin agreed that DPI should take steps to reach more diverse audiences through the use of up-to-date communication technologies, and measures should be taken to ensure that the Department had the resources necessary to execute that task. Therefore, while his Government acknowledged the serious financial difficulties confronting the Organization, he believed that it would be better to improve the effectiveness and productivity of DPI - by, for example, modernizing its procedures and rationalizing its funding mechanism - than to reduce its budget. If necessary the Department could even make additional use of extrabudgetary resources and reserve funds to finance urgent projects.

21. Turning to the report of the Secretary-General (A/47/462), he noted with satisfaction that the Department had followed the recommendations of the General Assembly regarding the priority of issues on which greater public

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

information was necessary. In that connection, DPI deserved special recognition for its information programme during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In the future, DPI would also play a central role in the dissemination of information for the coming World Conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

22. Given the renewed respect for the Organization among the general public, it was perfectly natural that the functions of DPI should be expanded to include coordination of the activities of United Nations information centres, so that as large a number of people as possible could be informed of the work of the United Nations. In that context, his delegation wished to receive more information regarding the Under-Secretary-General's suggestion to consolidate information and development activities. He noted the efforts that were currently under way to incorporate an "information component" into the activities of the UNDP in certain regions, and said that assigning responsibility for information activities to UNDP personnel could lead to the elimination of certain directors' positions or even the closing of some centres. While Benin recognized the need to reduce the cost of public information activities, nevertheless it was paradoxical that the Organization should contemplate closing information centres just as the peoples of the world, particularly those of the developing countries, were becoming more receptive to the message of the United Nations with regard to human rights and democracy. The loss of support for local media in the third world would be particularly damaging, as some local media institutions were just beginning to become more independent and pluralistic. Moreover, since most of the developing countries that were hosting information centres provided either financial contributions or free use of local facilities, it would be regrettable if the measures announced in the Secretary-General's report should reduce the effectiveness of those information centres. The Committee should examine the question of closing information centres very carefully and consider ways of reconciling the need for their rational management with the real needs of countries.

23. Benin supported the draft resolutions approved by the Committee on Information at its sixteenth session, and welcomed the request contained in the second draft resolution regarding efforts the Secretary-General could make to achieve parity between English and French in the press coverage of the General Assembly.

24. Turning to the question of radio broadcasting in Africa, he said that there was currently a high level of cooperation between the Africa unit in the United Nations Radio Section and African radio stations. Nevertheless, coverage of events in Africa remained inadequate. Also, despite agreements between the DPI and state radio agencies in Africa, the number of stations broadcasting programmes in French remained relatively small, and relays of French broadcasts were made only through Radio Cairo. He suggested that the Committee could examine the possibility of increasing the number of relay stations. In addition, his delegation was surprised that the report made no mention of the geographical distribution of personnel in the United Nations

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

Radio Section, and he requested the Secretariat to provide the Committee with relevant information.

25. The regional meetings of the information centres directors had been very useful. Proposals from those meetings regarding special information programmes for local centre directors could impart a new dynamism to the centres' activities.

26. Mrs. MAIKARFI (Niger) said that, in spite of the progress achieved during the previous ten years, there was a persistent imbalance between developed and developing countries in information processing and dissemination. Greater access to state-of-the-art information and communication technologies would allow the developing countries to catch up and would strengthen cultural pluralism. It was imperative, therefore, to establish a new, fairer and more efficient new world information and communication order on the basis of free circulation and balanced distribution of information. The United Nations, through DPI, had a fundamental role to play in that area.

27. Her delegation particularly welcomed the Organization's efforts in raising awareness of certain issues and in preparing for such future international meetings as the World Conference on Human Rights to be held in Vienna in June 1993 and the International Conference on Population and Development (Egypt, 1994), as well as the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in China, and the World Summit for Social Development, both planned for 1995.

28. Despite the positive elements, the United Nations continued to give pride of place to developed countries in sharing out budgetary resources for communications. Thus, the 12 United Nations information centres situated in Northern countries received more than two thirds of the relevant resources, while the 49 third world centres not only had to make do with the remaining third but also were in danger of coming under UNDP control. Worse, the very States that most urgently required United Nations information centres were first being asked to make an additional contribution; it was clear from the Secretary-General's report that such a contribution had been required in the case of the Sana'a centre. Meanwhile, those who could pay were not even required to supply premises free of charge, a concession that would save the Organization enough that it could afford to provide centres to those countries that needed them.

29. Her delegation hoped that the recommendations of the Committee on Information for increased bilateral and multilateral cooperation to reduce disparities and for increased assistance to developing countries for the development of their communications infrastructure could be implemented. It supported the work of the Department, but felt that the United Nations could do more by redeploying its resources so as to take into account the relative means of certain countries. Finally, she called for a director to be appointed to the United Nations Information Centre in Ouagadougou, which also served Niger.

30. Mr. OULD MOHAMED MAHMOUD (Mauritania), speaking on behalf of the five member States of the Arab Maghreb Union, Algeria, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Tunisia and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, said that there seemed to be a broad consensus in the Committee on the fundamental role played by information as the medium for dissemination of countries' values. The countries of the Union were committed to democratization and had adopted an information policy based on freedom and diversity within the framework of universally accepted ethical rules. It was clear, however, that while developing countries individually were trying to improve the quality and scope of their information media, there had been little progress in bringing greater balance, fairness and ethical content to world information flows. A new world information and communication order remained a legitimate aspiration of the international community. It was being sought by developing countries out of a real concern that certain peoples might be acculturated in view of the cultural content of the world media.

31. The new world information and communication order should lead to a rebalancing of information flow and increased information exchange between developed and developing countries. It should also allow regular technology transfer and ensure continuous training of journalists.

32. The Department of Public Information had shown determination and professionalism in implementing the General Assembly's recommendations, particulary those on the Palestine question, apartheid and environmental issues.

33. The States of the Arab Maghreb Union believed that the viability and independence of the United Nations information centres must be guaranteed and that they must be provided with human and material resources commensurate with their mission, as the lack of both was in many cases affecting their performance.

34. Mr. EKOUMILONG (Cameroon) said that the end of East-West confrontation and the considerable changes taking place in nearly all countries had made it possible for the principle of free flow of information to be unanimously recognized. His delegation saw information as fundamental to the United Nations role in building peace in the world, a role that implied the promotion of mutual understanding among peoples.

35. Although the theoretical underpinnings of United Nations policy on information were firm, much remained to be done in practical terms. There was a growing imbalance between developed countries and the third world, which cruelly lacked the modern means necessary to communicate to the world its own values, whether political, cultural, economic or social. Rather, countries of the South were deluged with news that lacked objectivity and, too often, impaired their image.

36. His delegation welcomed the fruitful cooperation of DPI with UNESCO in implementing the recommendations of the Windhoek and Alma Ata seminars. It

(Mr. Ekoumilong, Cameroon)

particularly encouraged the training for journalists from developing countries that had arisen out of that cooperation.

37. His delegation was pleased that the Yearbook of the United Nations was to appear without delay but deplored the serious financial difficulties of Development Forum, a unique economic publication with a loyal readership, and hoped that some way would be found to overcome the difficulties.

38. With regard to the process of integration of certain information centres with UNDP field offices, though the stated aim was to consolidate the United Nations image without jeopardizing the autonomy of the information component, his delegation held that Member States and particularly the Committee on Information should be amply consulted. The information centres' efforts, particularly in Africa, were important in eliminating such scourges as apartheid, poverty, drought and AIDS, and also promoted democracy and respect for human rights. His delegation encouraged the Department to pursue any policy tending to improve the material or technological means available to the centres, some of which had already been obliged to scale back their activities.

39. Free, independent and pluralistic information was again the order of the day in Cameroon, where dozens of private newspapers of every political stripe had sprung up since the press reforms of 1990. Cameroon was open to any support it might receive from international organizations or other sources to help it preserve democracy, particularly in the area of information. His delegation was pleased to support the draft resolutions as recommended by the Committee on Information.

40. Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica) reiterated her view that a new world information and communication order was a continuing and changing process aimed at guaranteeing freedom of expression, opinion and information for all, a basic human right set out in article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was therefore imperative for journalists to be allowed to perform their work properly without restrictions and any attack against them must be deplored.

41. It had been interesting to note the new tasks and challenges taken on by the Department of Public Information in fulfilling its obligation to publicize accurately and rapidly the Organization's expanding activities in an era of unprecedented change. Peace-keeping operations in particular attracted great public interest, and DPI had produced a valuable video series on the subject. The DPI reporting on the Conference on Evnironment and Development, one of the major events of 1992, as well as on the follow-up to the Conference, was a prime example of the human, technical, financial and professional resources it was able to bring to bear. Quite properly, the forthcoming World Conference on Human Rights was also already receiving extensive publicity. The next preparatory meeting for that Conference, the regional preparatory meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, would be held in Costa Rica in January 1993; unfortunately, budgetary constraints precluded DPI coverage, but the University for Peace had arranged to publicize the meeting within Costa Rica.

(Mrs. Castro de Barish, Costa Rica)

42. Her delegation endorsed the idea of proclaiming 3 May as Press Freedom Day, as proposed by UNESCO. A UNESCO initiative had led to the adoption of the Windhoek Declaration, and a UNESCO seminar held in Asia with DPI support had produced the similar Declaration of Alma Ata on Promoting Independent and Pluralistic Asian Media. Such seminars should be held in other parts of the world, especially the developing world.

43. Although Costa Rica had joined the consensus in the Committee on Information on the two draft resolutions now before the Special Political Committee, her delegation believed that their formulation should be updated; accordingly, she read out a number of textual amendments that it thought the Committee on Information should adopt at its spring session in 1993 when drafting the following year's resolutions.

44. In relation to the Secretary-General's proposal to integrate United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, it should be pointed out that the University for Peace in Costa Rica had excellent information resources and trained personnel at its disposal and was, in fact, publicizing United Nations activities in many parts of the world, with particular emphasis on the Caribbean subregion. It was already working jointly with both UNESCO and DPI in the field. A good case could be made for designating the University for Peace as a United Nations information centre.

45. Mr. RODRIGUE (Haiti) observed that as the mandate of DPI broadened to keep pace with the expanding activities of the Organization, the Department must refocus and revitalize its activities in keeping with the new international situation, and in order to meet the growing expectations of a public whose interest in the United Nations had awakened. The projection of the image of the United Nations in the world depended on the Department's effectiveness.

46. It was to be congratulated for its excellent publicity campaign for the Rio Conference, and also for its mobilization of information on the tragedies in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. The sad case of Liberia would merit a similar mobilization. DPI had also been instrumental in making known Haiti's electoral experience, but it should also keep focusing attention on the movement for the restoration of constitutional legality in Haiti.

47. Since information was the only way of coming to know the social conditions in other countries, Haiti supported all DPI publicity on issues such as humanitarian assistance, the war against drugs, the advancement of women and human rights. In the developing countries, information, especially through radio broadcasting and public notices, had become an effective, if still inadequate, means of combating ignorance and teaching civic values and democratic principles.

48. Just as nations needed to have information policies, a new world information and communication order must also be established, with political, psychological and social dimensions. It would do much to bring peoples

(Mr. Rodrigue, Haiti)

together and increase their solidarity and cooperation. It was all the more necessary in that the developing countries could not afford advanced information technologies. The new world information and communication order would allow a more balanced dissemination of information that was more responsive to the cultural needs and intellectual capacities of each society. To bring it about, the developing countries would have to be given the means to improve their communication infrastructures. Haiti therefore supported the UNESCO-administered IPDC, aimed at increasing the free flow of information and promoting better balance in communication capabilities through better trained professionals in the developing countries. The UNESCO-sponsored seminar in Namibia had been a great success and the Windhoek Declaration had attracted considerable interest in other developing countries for the establishment of a national and international partnership on an information strategy.

49. The Secretary-General's decision to open interim information centres in Eastern Europe was an excellent idea, and his delegation hoped that the same would be done in other parts of the world, especially in the Caribbean and in Haiti in particular, where such a centre had already been requested.

50. DPI was working valiantly with dwindling resources and required a commitment from all Member States. His delegation hoped that the Department would endeavour to ensure parity in its publication of French as well as English documents. Its broadcasting to the Caribbean was excellent, and the Creole language programmes should be expanded.

51. Ms. CLEOPAS (Cyprus) observed that the new climate of cooperation in the Committee on Information had produced draft resolutions aimed at eliminating the disparities in the flow of information and promoting the freedom of the press and of information that were essential to the whole process of the democratization of international relations and to global progress, mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence.

52. DPI had new challenges to meet in the post-cold war era, as it disseminated accurate information on newly expanded United Nations activities, especially in the field of peacemaking and peace-keeping, and on the key issues and problems of the day. The Department had taken a balanced approach to fulfilling its enhanced mandate. Its multimedia approach, as evidenced by the success of its reporting on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, deserved support, as did its efforts to develop a more coodinated and cost-effective approach to its publishing policy and programme, which should not, however, be allowed to affect its essential publications.

53. The continued collaboration between UNESCO and DPI, which had recently led to the Alma Ata Declaration, should be encouraged. Other important links in the Organization's information network were the United Nations information centres, and more of them should be established. Cyprus trusted that their integration with other United Nations offices would not in any way undermine their functional autonomy.

(Ms. Cleopas, Cyprus)

54. In Cyprus, the right of freedom of information and expression was constitutionally guaranteed, and the free flow of information was facilitated by its advanced telecommunications infrastructure. Cyprus strongly supported the development of the developing countries' communication infrastructures and capabilities

55. Mr. MOUSSAWI (Lebanon) commended the current level of cooperation between the Committee on Information and UNESCO. He also welcomed the latest version of the World Media Handbook but hoped that the typographical errors, and particularly those relating to Lebanon, would be corrected in future editions.

56. The current gap in information technology had produced, on the one hand, a group of rich countries able to saturate the world with its news bulletins, opinions and preconceptions and, on the other, a group of developing States whose ideas and values were being erased because of their inability to propagate or convey their message. The industrialized countries, with their ample resources, must work to achieve a balance, so that all mankind might be aware of the civilizations and values of the peoples of the developing world. Such efforts would help to promote the principle of intellectual diversity so often advocated by the developed countries and to enrich human thought as a whole. Since the United Nations could contribute significantly to the narrowing of the gap, its capacities in the field of information should be developed and strengthened in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter and of human rights legislation.

57. While his delegation welcomed the establishment of United Nations information centres in six member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States and elsewhere, it hoped that such expansion would not take place at the expense of no less important existing centres. In particular, prompt action should be taken, following the improvement of the security situation in Lebanon, to appoint a new director for the information centre at Beirut and to strengthen the centre's activities. Despite all that it had endured during the war, Beirut remained the principal focus for the dissemination of information in the Arab world and the Middle East as a whole.

58. In conclusion, his delegation paid tribute to those who had given their lives while defending freedom of speech and the freedom of the press.

59. Mr. HUQ (Bangladesh) said that his delegation recognized the important role of information in nation-building and promoting amity among nations, and United Nations information centres had an important role to play in informing the public of United Nations activities to promote peace, security and development. In that connection, the absence of a director at the Dakha centre for the last five years was regrettable. He hoped that DPI would take the steps necessary to provide a full-time director soon so that the people of his country could have adequate and timely information regarding the United Nations.

(Mr. Huq, Bangladesh)

60. In order to achieve a free flow of information, Member States should make an honest effort to reduce the current imbalances between developed and developing countries in their respective capabilities for the dissemination of information. In that regard, the United Nations should take the necessary steps to enhance the information infrastructure of developing countries so that they too would be able to project their points of view to the world. After all, the goal of the new information and communication order was to provide an opportunity for all countries to disseminate their views on various issues so as to create consensus.

61. His Government had reaffirmed its commitment to the freedom of press, freedom of expression and freedom of opinion. Bangladesh attached the utmost importance to information as an essential vehicle for the promotion of democracy and development, and was currently examining ways of improving access to information by installing telecommunication and broadcasting systems for remote regions of the country.

62. In conclusion, he expressed his full support for the draft resolutions proposed by the Committee on Information and hoped that they would be adopted by consensus.

63. Mr. AL-OTAIBI (Kuwait) said his delegation shared the concern expressed by some other Member States concerning the effect of a reduction in financial resources on the activities of DPI. The rapid and radical changes of recent years had created new responsibilities for the Organization, and the Department's activities must be adapted accordingly, concentrating, inter alia, on the problems of development and external debt, the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, apartheid and the tragedies of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Somalia. His delegation also believed in the need for a new world information and communication order based on an equitable exchange of information and looked for a redoubling of efforts by the industrialized countries, the Department and the specialized agencies, particularly UNESCO, to strengthen the media of the developing countries.

64. Despite the very significant role of information in enhancing stability and good relations between States, his delegation sympathized with those countries which had expressed concern about the negative effects of foreign media on their cultures. His country continued to face a threat to its existence, and to the stability and security of the region as a whole, in the form of falsehoods and spurious allegations concerning so-called historic claims to Kuwait disseminated by the Iraqi media. The Security Council had been notified and provided with examples of such falsehoods in early August 1992, in direct contradiction of the Iraqi regime's assertions concerning compliance with Council resolutions.

65. In conclusion, his delegation expressed its support for the draft resolution contained in document A/SPC/47/L.9.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.

UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

Official Records

SPECIAL POLITICAL COMMITTEE
23rd meeting
held on
Friday, 20 November 1992
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FUENTES-IBAÑEZ (Bolivia)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued)

This record is subject to correction.
Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

92-57935 6454S (E)

Distr. GENERAL
A/SPC/47/SR.23
4 December 1992
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

/...

In the absence of Mr. Khouini (Tunisia), Mr. Fuentes-Ibañez (Tunisia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 76: QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION (continued) (A/47/21 and 462 and Corr.1; A/SPC/47/L.9, L.10* and L.13)

1. Mr. MBA ALLO (Gabon) said that the introduction of multiparty system had led, nearly everywhere in Africa, and especially in Black Africa, to the freedom and pluralism of the media: it was now possible to read, hear and see everything. The question which arose was, in fact, of a technological nature: would national television channels survive the impending onslaught of technological and industrial innovation? With their inadequate institutional and legal frameworks and feeble resources, they could not remain competitive when challenged by the flow of high-technology foreign products.

2. In order to redress that structural imbalance and to lessen the impact of the unidirectional flow of information, the communications infrastructures of many developing countries should be strengthened, and training programmes for print journalists and radio and television broadcasters from those countries should be improved. In that context, Gabon supported the International Programme for Development of Communication sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and fully endorsed the central role of UNESCO in promoting the free flow of information and strengthening the communications capabilities of the developing countries, in particular.

3. The Gabonese delegation welcomed the useful and outstanding work accomplished during the year by the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat in promoting international cooperation in the field of communication; it noted, however, that problems remained.

4. Gabon supported the recommendations of the Committee on Information concerning the United Nations information centres; it hoped, however, that the role of such centres would be enhanced, particularly in the third world, since in many developing countries, they often constituted the sole source of information on the international policies of the United Nations, and also contained good research libraries. The Gabonese Government was currently exploring possibilities for cooperation with the Department of Public Information with a view to the opening of such a centre at Libreville. He took the opportunity to thank the members of the Committee on Information who had supported the requests by Gabon, Bulgaria and Haiti for information components (A/SPC/47/L.10*, para. 12).

5. With regard to the restructuring of the Department of Public Information, the Gabonese delegation drew the attention of the Secretariat to the importance of an equitable geographical distribution of posts within the

(Mr. Mba Allo, Gabon)

Department. There was an imbalance in the representation of African countries, particularly French-speaking Black African countries, which should be redressed. A similar imbalance existed with regard to radio and television programmes; more programmes should be produced in French by French-speaking producers and correspondents.

6. The establishment of a multiparty system in Gabon two years earlier had gone hand in hand with quantitative and qualitative improvements in the field of information. Gabon had always supported the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, especially the basic principles of freedom of information and freedom of expression and opinion. Now, with the large number of publications and national television and radio channels, to which an international channel, Africa No. 1, had recently been added, pluralism had really been established in the information field. The National Council on Communication, an independent institutional body, was responsible for ensuring the exercise of democracy and freedom of the press throughout Gabonese territory. Gabon had thus succeeded in establishing a new domestic information and communication order, but could do still more with the assistance of friendly countries, non-governmental organizations and the Department of Public Information.

7. Mr. VALEV (Bulgaria) said that the profound changes which had swept across various parts of the globe over the past few years had not only confirmed the validity of the universally recognized ideals of freedom and democracy, but had also highlighted the importance of freedom of expression and opinion as a basic human right within the overall framework of human rights which the United Nations had upheld for decades. Bulgaria believed that such individual rights were part and parcel of the foundations of any democratic society; that conviction was embodied in the new Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria, and was demonstrated in practice in the growing diversification of the Bulgarian mass media, as part of the overall process of democratization.

8. The new international climate, free of ideological confrontation, offered favourable opportunities for promoting international cooperation in various fields, including issues relating to information and communication. Furthermore, the broad and free dissemination of objective information, with due respect for the traditions and cultural achievements of all peoples, had become a prerequisite for the promotion and development of international cooperation in all spheres of modern life, and an increasingly important factor in the maintenance of international peace and security. Without freedom of information, it would be impossible to build mutual trust and understanding, which were the pillars of inter-State relations in the contemporary world.

9. His delegation supported the efforts to eliminate the existing disparities in the flow of information. The establishment of a more homogeneous information environment would be in the interests of all members

(Mr. Valev, Bulgaria)

of the international community and, in that connection, UNESCO activities under the International Programme for the Development of Communication aimed at helping developing countries to upgrade their communications systems, merited special attention and support. Providing easier access to modern communications technologies was of concern not only to developing countries, but also to a broader category of States.

10. The previous year, one of swift and dynamic change in the international situation, there had been a revitalization of faith and confidence in the potential of the United Nations. That tendency to enhance the role of the Organization in international affairs was paralleled by the emergence of a new public opinion more favourable to the United Nations and its activities. That situation made new demands on the Department of Public Information, which was a major component of the United Nations information system. His delegation supported the drive to further streamline United Nations information activities and congratulated the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and the staff of the Department on their performance on such priority issues as international peace and security, disarmament, peace-keeping, human rights, economic and social development, etc.

11. At the same time, Bulgaria was aware that much remained to be done if the Department of Public Information was to meet the growing requirements for United Nations information activities. It was important for the Department to make the most efficient use of all resources at its disposal, especially at a time of serious financial difficulties for the Organization. The Department could re-examine its operations with a view to redeployment of human and financial resources to higher priority issues. Some DPI units were overstaffed at the expense of other services engaged in activities of greater importance for the entire international community.

12. Given the increased involvement of the United Nations in preventive diplomacy, peace-keeping and peacemaking, his delegation shared the idea expressed by some delegations that the Department of Public Information should devote more attention to such activities and missions. Introducing an information component at the planning stage of each peace-keeping operation could prove quite useful for the success of the operation.

13. His delegation was convinced of the importance of the United Nations information centres in enhancing the role and image of the Organization. It supported their integration, where appropriate, with United Nations Development Programme field offices, while preserving the functional autonomy of the information component. Such an approach would facilitate the widening of the United Nations network of information centres in a most cost-effective way. Bulgaria attached particular importance to the opening of a United Nations information centre in Sofia, and welcomed the first contact that had been made to that end with the UNDP Office in Sofia. Naturally, other countries also aspired to have such centres on their territories; therefore, the question of opening new United Nations information centres should be given

(Mr. Valev, Bulgaria)

due attention and every possibility should be carefully examined. Meanwhile, those countries that did not yet have such centres should be involved more actively in DPI programmes of interest to them.

14. He welcomed the spirit of cooperation and consensus established in the Committee on Information during its last three sessions. He hoped that that consensus would be maintained and that the Special Political Committee, as well as the General Assembly, would adopt the proposed drafts without a vote.

15. Ms. SAMATE (Burkina Faso) said that with the end of the bipolar world, the United Nations assumed a key role in realizing the ideals and objectives of the Charter. Now that the Organization was action-oriented it needed strong media support to disseminate its principles and publicize its activities, so that information was undeniably essential not only at the national level but also in promoting international relations, peace-keeping and peace-building, preventive diplomacy, environment and development, the defence of human rights, etc.

16. However, developing countries were faced with a de facto information monopoly purposely maintained by the countries of the Northern hemisphere, whose media broadcast to the Southern hemisphere information on the South that was more often biased than trustworthy. The South also had a chronic shortage of infrastructure, matériel and modern equipment. Burkino Faso therefore shared other delegations' concern that high priority should be given to technology transfer.

17. In addition, training and information were needed for those who must in turn inform the people. Burkina Faso therefore supported the Department of Public Information programme for journalists from developing countries and hoped there would be a proportionate increase in the number of participants. It also supported the International Programme for the Development of Communication begun by UNESCO and the cooperation between DPI and UNESCO in promoting media development and freedom of the press. There should also be an increase in exchanges among journalists, experts and information technicians through seminars. Particular emphasis should be put on the promotion of regional, interregional and international cooperation with a view to reducing development disparities between rich and poor countries.

18. Burkina Faso was firmly attached to the principle of the free flow of information and was convinced that the dissemination of accurate and objective information was fundamental to peace, security and development. It appreciated the activities and the determined efforts on the part of DPI to improve the quality of its publications, to meet the General Assembly's requirements and to disseminate information the world over.

19. Her delegation congratulated the Department on its efforts to overcome the five-year delay in publishing the Yearbook of the United Nations and gave a list of Burkina Faso newspapers that should be added to those appearing in

(Ms. Samate, Burkina Faso)

the second 1992 edition of the World Media Handook; she also mentioned the programme Arc-en-ciel, produced by Burkina Faso national radio, which broadcast several children's programmes. Its free, independent and varied news programmes were not only informative but educational for the people of Burkina Faso.

20. Furthermore, she welcomed the adoption by consensus of the recommendations of the Committee on Information at its fourteenth session and supported the draft resolutions contained in its report (A/47/21). She also wished to offer some comments on the work of the Department of Public Information. The deplorable financial situation of Development Forum might force it to cease publication, although it was of major importance to the developing countries. Its financial situation must be examined carefully.

21. The establishment in some countries of United Nations interim offices, which were of proven importance, was welcome. Without opposing their establishment, she pointed out, however, that procedures had not been followed: current practice would require the General Assembly to decide to open such offices on the recommendation of the Committee on Information. Moreover, she was concerned about the requirements of those offices and hoped that their operation would not materially or financially affect the activities of existing centres.

22. In that regard, the continuing problem with the United Nations information centre in Ouagadougou, which served Burkina Faso, Mali, the Niger and Chad, was a cause for concern. That Centre had been without a director since April 1991. Her delegation urgently requested the appointment of a new full-time director, given the importance of that centre. That appointment would not in any way damage the unified image of the United Nations, and would allow the centre to expand and strengthen its activities in schools, universities and rural areas, where the need to learn about the United Nations was increasingly apparent. It must be borne in mind that the credibility and prestige of the United Nations also depended on how people perceived the role of the Organization. The human and material resources of the Ouagadougou Centre should also be improved and strengthened.

23. Her delegation took note of the integration of 18 information centres (A/47/462, para. 108), but wondered about the impact of that operational integration which had been effected without taking into account the importance of those centres to African peoples, and despite repeated requests that the functioning of all centres should be evaluated leaving aside the financial considerations underlying that action, Burkina Faso would like to know the real purpose of the consolidation. In its opinion, it would have been better to conduct an evaluation and reorganization of those centres rather than to consolidate some and maintain others as they were.

24. Her delegation also reiterated its request for the extension of weekly news broadcasts such as Bonjour l'Afrique to some French-speaking radio

(Ms. Samate, Burkina Faso)

networks, in particular the national radio network of Burkina Faso. News programmes on the preparatory activities for the various world conferences should be fleshed out, particularly those intended for developing countries. Her delegation commended the efforts to achieve parity in facilities and working methods for the coverage of meetings in English and French, but believed that the French-speaking service should be further improved.

25. Finally, Burkina Faso renewed its support for the Republic of Korea and Senegal as candidates for membership in the Committee on Information.

26. Mr. WYZNER (Under-Secretary-General for Public Information) thanked the members of the Special Political Committee for their constructive comments on the activities of the Department of Public Information. In response to the many speakers, including the representatives of Denmark (speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries), the Islamic Republic of Iran, Nepal, the United Republic of Tanzania and the United Kingdom (speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the European Community), who had emphasized that the Department required adequate resources, he regretted, as the representative of Argentina had stated, that demand so often exceeded supply. He agreed, therefore, with the views expressed by the representatives of Bulgaria, Poland, Senegal and the United Kingdom that DPI would be better prepared to react to unexpected events and to the emerging priorities of the world community if it had greater budgetary flexibility. He assured the representative of Brazil that the posts and resources allocated for research and the collection of information and for secretariat services to the Publications Board had been transferred to the Department of Public Information along with the respective functions.

27. He thanked the many delegations, particularly those of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Myanmar, Pakistan (on behalf of the Group of 77) and Poland, which had reaffirmed their support for Development Forum, the only United Nations system-wide publication on economic and social issues, which could be forced to cease publication due to lack of funds. The matter had been submitted to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), whose recommendations would soon be transmitted to the General Assembly through the Fifth Committee. The magazine Africa Recovery was experiencing similar financial problems, although less acute. The representatives of Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria had emphasized the need to provide adequate resources in order to maintain that publication, which had a wide audience and fulfilled the important function, emphasized by the representative of Senegal, of informing the world community on positive economic developments in Africa. Its costs could not be entirely absorbed within the regular budget of the Department of Public Information, but every effort would be made to cover them entirely in the 1994-1995 proposed programme budget.

28. After thanking the delegations which had praised the Yearbook of the United Nations and the World Media Handbook, he informed those which had pointed out errors and omissions, particularly the Czech and Slovak Federal

(Mr. Wyzner)

Republic, that the database for the preparation of the next edition was constantly being updated.

29. Replying to the representative of Pakistan who had requested the strengthening of Urdu language radio programmes within DPI, he said that the Department currently was reviewing the format and content of those programmes and would discuss the matter with the Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation. Unfortunately, the possibility of producing programmes in new languages was limited by the lack of resources. It would be impossible, therefore, to produce programmes in Nepali as requested by the representative of Nepal, but the Department could furnish the necessary raw materials to Nepali broadcasters. It was of the highest importance for the future of the United Nations to reach youth, and the Department of Public Information was attempting to place radio programmes with university radio stations, an effort which the United States delegation had endorsed.

30. Replying to the representatives of Benin, Gabon and Burkina Faso, he said that, in addition to "L'Afrique à l'ONU", the francophone stations received a weekly 15-minute feature documentary entitled "Perspectives internationales", covering such priority issues as African economic recovery, the situation of African children, peace-keeping, AIDS, hunger, refugees, apartheid and the environment, as well as a bimonthly programme entitled "Femmes", on the status of women. In addition, the current affairs magazine "Bonjour l'Afrique" was fed to Radio Cairo for international short-wave broadcast. The Department was seeking to expand its cooperation with radio stations that had powerful transmitters covering target areas in neighbouring countries. A recent pilot cooperation project with Africa No. 1 should result in the regular transmission of United Nations news from Gabon to the whole of West Africa. Currently, 40 African radio stations, including Radiodiffusion du Benin, were using taped United Nations radio programmes in French.

31. Many delegations, including those of Argentina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Czechoslovakia, Denmark (on behalf of the five Nordic countries), India, Kuwait and the United Kingdom (on behalf of the 12 countries of the European Community), had highlighted the important role played by the Department of Public Information in peacemaking, peace-keeping and preventive diplomacy.

32. The Department of Public Information agreed that peace-keeping operations and similar missions should have an information component. Good information programmes could help to generate support and increase mission effectiveness by fostering a better understanding and appreciation of the role of the United Nations, both in the area of operations and in the rest of the world, particularly the troop-contributing countries. That was why the Department of Public Information tried to evaluate a mission's public information needs early in the planning stage. In cooperation with the department concerned, it had prepared standards for programmes of that type. He concurred with the representative of the United Kingdom that each operation should receive sufficient funding to disseminate information in accordance with those

(Mr. Wyzner)

standards. The Department would endeavour to find the resources to respond adequately to unforeseen situations and to continue publication of the reference materials, whose usefulness had been emphasized by many delegations.

33. Replying to the representatives of Cuba, Haiti and the United Kingdom, he said that the Secretary-General and the Secretariat attached great importance to disseminating information on the dramatic situation in Somalia and the Organization's efforts to relieve the suffering, as demonstrated by the exhibit currently on display in the General Assembly Hall lobby.

34. The Department of Public Information was working to keep the world informed of the repercussions of the Chernobyl disaster, a topic to which the delegation of Belarus attached high priority. In addition to producing press releases and radio programmes, the Department had arranged several press conferences on the subject for the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

35. The Department of Public Information had established a task force to assist the General Assembly Preparatory Committee for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations and had begun to prepare several television programmes, publications, exhibits and other events. As requested by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Secretariat would report on those preparations to the Committee on Information at its next session.

36. A number of delegations - Benin, China, the Congo, Gabon, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan and Viet Nam - had inquired about equitable geographical distribution in recruitment within the Department of Public Information. Working with the Office of Human Resources Management, the Department was making every effort to ensure equitable geographical and gender representation. However, the existing freeze on recruitment made it difficult to correct imbalances.

37. Several delegations had expressed concern at the allocation of resources to the United Nations information centres, whose importance had been stressed by a great many delegations. A report on that topic had been submitted to the Committee on Information in 1992, and another could be submitted in 1993. A dialogue with the developed countries in which information centres were located had been initiated and would be pursued. Several countries were already making contributions; Greece had recently joined them, and France, Italy and Spain had indicated that they planned to do the same. A number of delegations, including those of Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, the Congo, Gabon, Lebanon, the Niger, Poland and the United Republic of Tanzania, had inquired about the centre's future. The Department would make every effort to implement the relevant resolutions within the limits of available resources.

38. He assured delegations that the integration process, guided by the recommendations of the Committee on Information, would not undermine the

(Mr. Wyzner)

functional autonomy of the information component of the field offices of the United Nations Development Programme and that it would take the Department's mandates into account.

39. The representative of the United States had mentioned the need for the Department to develop clear objectives for its information products. As he himself had indicated in his statements to the Special Political Committee and to the Committee on Information at its fourteenth session, clearly defined objectives, sound targeting of audiences and careful evaluation of impact were becoming an integral part of the Department's programmes. The Yearbook of the United Nations, the UN Chronicle, radio programmes and liaison activities with non-governmental organizations - to name just a few - reflected that concern.

40. With respect to the question raised by the representatives of Benin, Chile and the Niger, multimedia information programmes would be designed for the upcoming major conferences, including the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women and world summit for social development in 1995. The Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) would coordinate their implementation at the inter-agency level. Following the Rio Conference, the Department had been able to disseminate key information materials with financial assistance from the Danish Government. The representative of Denmark had drawn attention to the need to promote post-Conference activities. The Department would continue to carry out its task in that field.

41. With respect to the anti-apartheid programmes to which the representatives of Bangladesh, the Congo, Costa Rica, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Poland and Yemen had referred, the Department would review them as warranted by developments in the situation in South Africa, which it was following very closely.

42. In response to requests from a number of delegations, the Department would continue to work with UNESCO, particularly through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), to provide assistance in the development of communications infrastructures in the developing world and in the training of print journalists and radio and television broadcasters in developing countries. Several seminars had been organized in cooperation with UNESCO, including those at Windhoek and Alma Ata. Chile had offered to host a regional seminar in 1993 and Yemen had expressed interest in hosting a regional seminar when circumstances permitted.

43. With regard to the need to diversify information sources, cited by the representatives of Cameroon, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Viet Nam, the Department had always welcomed cooperation with the news agencies of the non-aligned countries with a view to reaching wider audiences.

(Mr. Wyzner)

44. The Department wanted to improve the working conditions of journalists accredited to the United Nations, but the lack of office space in the Secretariat building was a major problem. The press office space on the third and fourth floors of the Secretariat building would probably have to be redesigned. In the meantime, the Department would continue to explore all possible avenues in consultation with the interested parties.

45. Owing to time constraints he could not address many of the valuable observations made during the debate; however, he would give them careful consideration with his colleague.

46. In conclusion, Member States and the Department of Public Information should explore new avenues for bringing the message of a revitalized United Nations to the peoples of the world.

47. Mr. LOPEZ OSPINA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)), referring to the suggestions made during the debate for strengthening the communication capacity of developing countries, providing a greater number of States with access to modern communication technologies, widening the free flow of information and reducing existing disparities in the field of information dissemination, welcomed the emphasis placed by the Nordic countries on enhancing the communication capacity of the developing world in their discussions with developing countries on economic cooperation. It was primarily through the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), which once again was being supported in the draft resolutions by the States represented on the Committee on Information, that UNESCO provided assistance to developing countries by training specialized personnel and organizing seminars and workshops. He was gratified to note that the seminars organized in cooperation with the Department of Public Information at Windhoek and in Kazakhstan had been warmly received.

48. UNESCO would do its utmost to enhance its cooperation with the Department of Public Information and other United Nations agencies and programmes with a view to furthering the development of information and communication. As some delegations had suggested, cooperation with universities in the field of information should make it possible to bring the socio-economic and cultural aspects of individual regions into clearer focus. Information made a major contribution to the enrichment of human culture and civilization.

49. Lastly, he thanked those delegations that had supported the proposal to declare 3 May as International Press Freedom Day.

50. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it the Committee wished to adopt draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.9, on information in the service of humanity, and draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.10 (reissued), on United Nations public information policies and activities. The statement of

(The Chairman)

programme budget implications of the latter draft resolution was contained in document A/SPC/47/L.13.

51. Draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.9 and L.10 were adopted without a vote.

52. Mr. SUHAIL (Pakistan), speaking in his capacity as Acting Chairman of the Committee on Information, welcomed the adoption by consensus of the two draft resolutions and said that the decision reflected the importance which the Committee attached to questions relating to information. It was important to maintain the consensus which had been obtained through the cooperation displayed by the members of the Group of 77, China, and others so that the Committee could carry out its task and formulate recommendations for the Department of Public Information. He also welcomed the Republic of Korea and Senegal to the Committee.

53. Mr. BACKSTROM (Finland), speaking on behalf of Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Leichtenstein, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, commended the Chairman and the members of the Special Political Committee for their constructive debate on information questions and for the adoption of the draft resolutions by consensus. He also wished to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information for his review of his Department's activities and, in particular, for organizing informational meetings on questions of great interest to Member States. He also welcomed the Republic of Korea and Senegal as new members of the Committee on Information.

54. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to the draft decision contained in paragraph 80 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/47/21) to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 by appointing the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members and suggested that the Committee should adopt the draft decision without a vote.

55. The draft decision contained in paragraph 80 of the report of the Committee on Information (A/47/21) was adopted without a vote.

56. The CHAIRMAN announced that, having concluded its consideration of agenda item 76, the Committee would defer consideration of agenda item 74 until Monday, 23 November. The list of speakers for that item would be closed on that day at the end of the afternoon meeting.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.